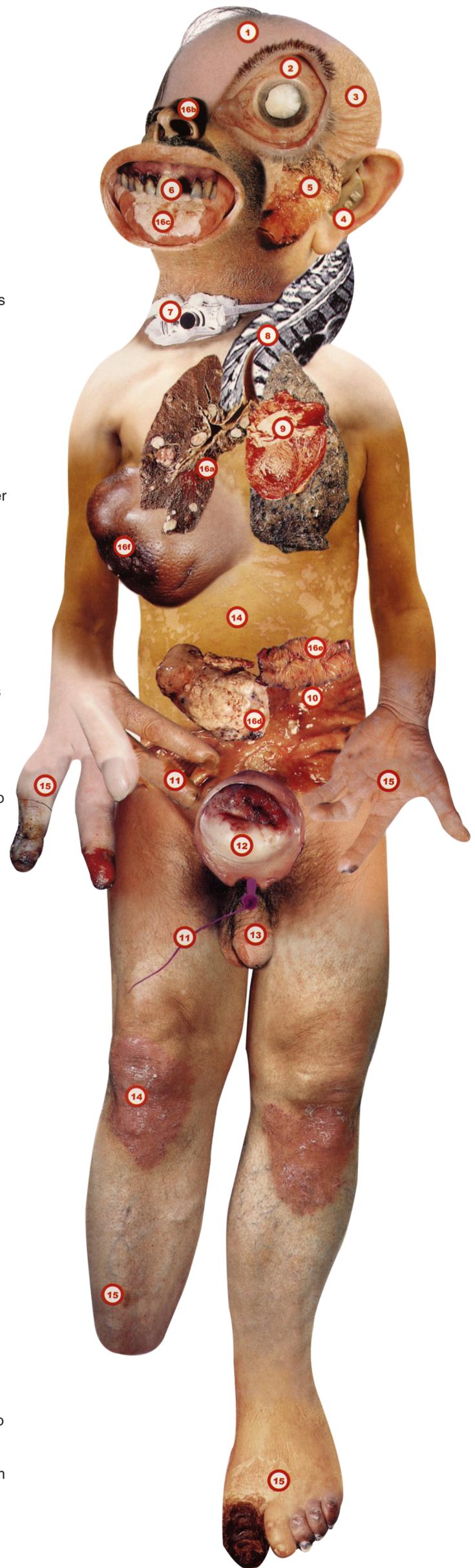


The Smoker's Body

Every 8 seconds someone dies from tobacco use, says the World Health Organization. Research suggests that people who start smoking in their teens (as more than 70 percent do) and continue for two decades or more will die 20 to 25 years earlier than those who never light up. It is not just lung cancer or heart disease that cause serious health problems and death. Below, some of smoking's less publicized side effects from head to toe.

1. **Hair loss** Smoking weakens the immune system, leaving the body more vulnerable to diseases such as lupus erythematosus, which can cause hair loss, ulcerations in the mouth and rashes on the face, scalp and hands.
2. **Cataracts** Smoking is believed to cause or worsen several eye conditions. Smokers have a 40 percent higher rate of cataracts, (a clouding of the eye's lens that blocks light and may lead to blindness). Smoke causes cataracts in two ways: by irritating the eyes and by releasing chemicals into the lungs that then travel up the bloodstream to the eyes. Smoking is also associated with age-related macular degeneration, and incurable eye disease caused by the deterioration of the central portion of the retina, known as macula. The macula is responsible for focusing central vision in the eye and controls our ability to read, drive a car, recognize faces or colours, and see objects in fine detail.
3. **Wrinkling** Smoking permanently ages skin by wearing away proteins that give it elasticity, depleting it a vitamin A and restricting blood flow. Smoker's skin is dry, leathery and etched with fine lines, especially around the limbs and eyes.
4. **Hearing loss** Because smoking creates plaque on blood vessels walls, decreasing blood flow to the inner ear, smokers can lose their hearing earlier than non-smokers and are more susceptible to hearing loss caused by ear infections or loud noise. Smokers are also three times more likely than non-smokers to get middle ear infections that can lead to further complications such as meningitis and facial paralysis.
5. **Skin cancer** Smoking does not cause melanoma (a sometimes deadly form of skin cancer), but it does increase the chances of dying from it. Smokers have a two-fold increased risk of contracting cutaneous squamous cell cancer – a cancer that leaves scaly, red eruptions on the skin.
6. **Tooth decay** Smoking interferes with the mouth's chemistry, creating excess plaque, yellowing teeth and contributing to tooth decay. Smokers are one and half times more likely to lose their teeth.
7. **Emphysema** In addition to lung cancer, smoking causes emphysema, a swelling and rupturing of the lung's air sacs that reduces the lungs' capacity to take in oxygen and expel carbon dioxide. In extreme cases, a tracheostomy allows patients to breathe. An opening is cut in the windpipe and a ventilator to force air into the lungs (see image). Chronic bronchitis (not shown) creates a build-up of pus-filled mucus, resulting in a painful cough and breathing difficulties.
8. **Osteoporosis** Carbon monoxide, the main poisonous gas in a car exhaust fumes and cigarette smoke, binds to blood much more readily than oxygen, cutting the oxygen-carrying power of heavy smokers' blood by as much as 15 percent. As a result, smokers' bones lose density, fracture more easily and take up to 80 percent longer to heal. Smokers may also be more susceptible to back problems: one study shows that industrial workers who smoke are five times as likely to experience back pain after injury.
9. **Heart Disease** One out of three deaths in the world is due to cardiovascular diseases. Smoking is one of the biggest risk factors for developing cardiovascular diseases. These diseases kill more than a million people a year in developing countries. Smoking-related cardiovascular diseases kill more than 600 000 people each year in developed countries. Smoking makes the heart beat faster, raise blood pressure and increases the risk of hypertension and clogged arteries and eventually cause heart attacks and strokes.
10. **Stomach ulcers** Smoking reduces resistance to the bacteria that cause stomach ulcers. It also impairs the stomach's ability to neutralize acid after a meal., leaving the acid to eat away the stomach lining. Smokers' ulcers are harder to treat and more likely to recur.
11. **Discoloured fingers** The tar in cigarette smoke collect on the fingers and fingernails, staining them a yellowish brown.
12. **Uterine cancer** and miscarriages Besides increasing the risk of cervical and uterine cancer, smoking creates fertility problems for women and complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of low weight babies and future ill health consequences. Miscarriage is 2 to 3 times more common in smokers, as are still births due to fetal oxygen deprivation and placental abnormalities induced by carbon monoxide and nicotine in cigarette smoke. Sudden infant death syndrome is also associated with smoking. In addition, smoking can lower estrogen levels causing premature menopause.
13. **Deformed sperm** Smoking can deform sperm and damage its DNA, which could cause miscarriage or birth defects. Some studies have found that men who smoke have an increased risk of fathering a child who contracts cancer. Smoking diminishes sperm count and reduces the blood flow to the penis, which can cause impotence. Infertility is more common among smokers.
14. **Psoriasis** Smokers are two to three times likely to develop psoriasis, a noncontagious inflammatory skin condition that leaves itchy, oozing red patches all over the body.
15. **Buerger's disease** Buerger's disease, also known as thromboangitis obliterans, is an inflammation of the arteries, veins, and in the legs, principally, leading to restricted blood flow. Left untreated, Buerger's disease can lead to gangrene (death of body tissue) and amputation of the affected areas.
16. **Cancer** More than 40 elements in tobacco smoke have been shown to cause cancer. Smokers are 22 times more likely to develop lung cancer 16a than non-smokers. And according to a number of studies, the longer one smokes, the greater the risk of developing a number of other cancers, including cancer of the nose (2 times greater) 16b; tongue 16c; mouth, salivary gland and pharynx (6 to 27 times): throat (12 times); oesophagus (8 to 10 times); larynx (10 to 18 times); stomach (2 to 3 times); kidneys (5 times) 16d; bladder (3 times); penis (2 to 3 times); pancreas (2 to 5 times) 16e; colon-rectus (3 times) and anus (5 to 6 times). Some studies have also found a link between smoking and breast cancer 16f.



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