



How does smoking affect pain in my body?

If you live with chronic pain, you are not alone—almost 100 million Americans live with this condition.

People with chronic pain smoke about two times more than the general population. This is likely due to two reasons: (1) smoking can cause or worsen chronic pain conditions and (2) some people smoke to try to control or distract them from their pain.

Smoking can cause and make certain conditions more painful including

- Back pain
- Headache activity
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Tooth and gum pain
- Fibromyalgia

In addition, if you have been diagnosed with cancer and continue to smoke, you are likely to experience more pain than people with cancer who have never smoked or who quit.

What happens when I try to control pain with smoking?

Some people believe smoking helps them deal with their chronic pain so when they feel the pain coming on, they reach for a cigarette.

There are chemicals in cigarettes that may temporarily relieve your pain. But when you're done smoking, the pain is still there and you begin to feel withdrawal from nicotine, which can make the pain worse.

If I quit smoking, will it help me reduce the pain in my body?

- If you live with conditions like back pain, severe headaches, or fibromyalgia, quitting smoking can help reduce the associated pain
- If you have cancer and you quit smoking, over time you may significantly reduce the pain associated with your cancer symptoms and treatment

I want to quit using tobacco — how do I get started?

- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday, available in English & Spanish
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program—text the word **VET** to **47848** (or **VETesp** to **47848** for Spanish) or visit smokefree.gov/VET
- Talk to your VA primary care provider or pain management specialist about tobacco cessation medications and counseling that can help you quit
- Visit publichealth.va.gov/smoking