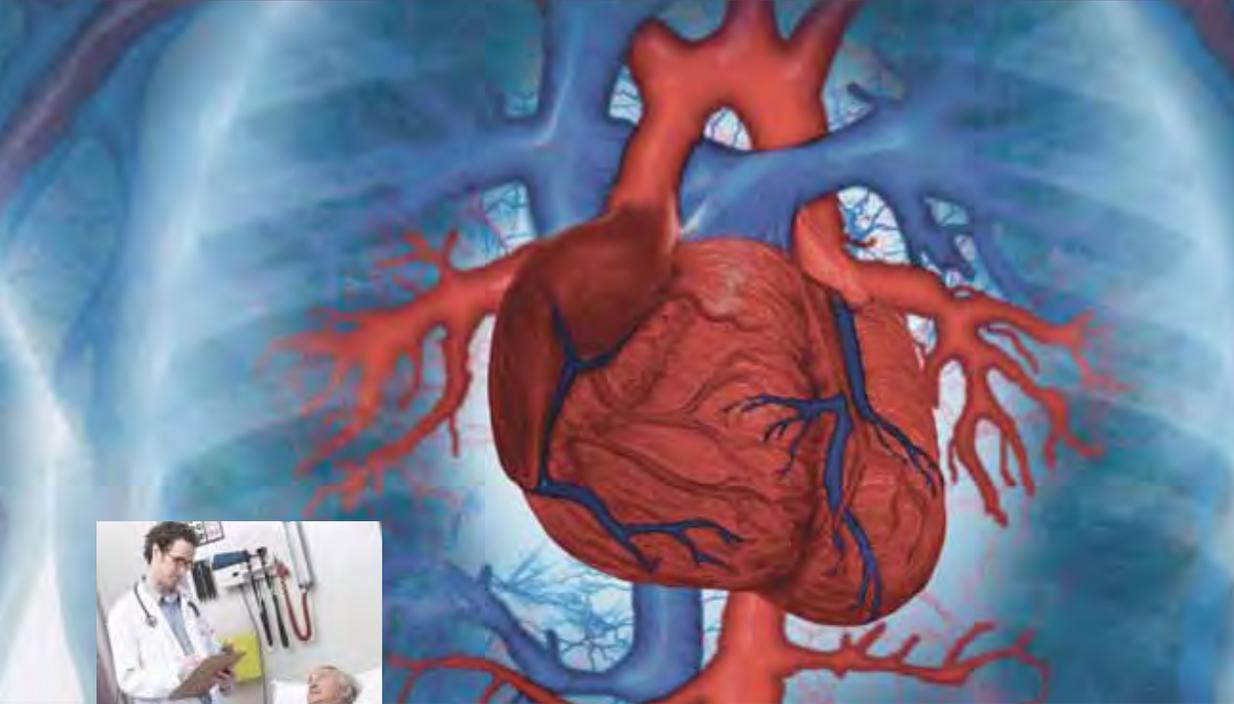


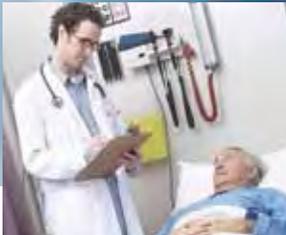
# circulatory

Smoking causes immediate damage to your arteries.



## Smoking can cause

- aneurysms, which are bulging blood vessels that can burst and cause death
- stroke, which is sudden death of brain cells caused by blood clots or bleeding
- heart attack and damage to your arteries



Smoking increases the danger of heart attack and stroke.

**B**reathing tobacco smoke can change your blood chemistry. This

damages blood vessels. *Almost immediately, cells that line your body's blood vessels react to the poisons in tobacco smoke.* Your heart rate and blood pressure go up. Your blood vessels thicken and grow narrower.

### Smoking alters your blood chemistry.

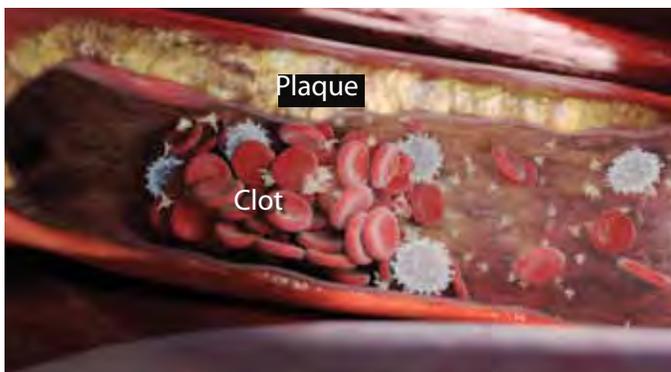
When you get a cut, blood cells called platelets stick together to form a clot. This helps stop the cut from bleeding. However, blood clots cause trouble when they form inside your body. Chemical changes caused by smoking make blood too sticky. Deadly clots form that can block blood flow to your heart, brain, or legs.

Breathing tobacco smoke causes other changes in your blood. Your triglyceride level rises, and your “good cholesterol” level falls. The chemicals in tobacco smoke also prevent your body from repairing damaged places in the lining of your arteries. Clots are more likely to form in a damaged artery.

### Smoking leads to heart attack and stroke.

Smoking is one cause of dangerous plaque buildup inside your arteries. Plaque is made of cholesterol and scar tissue. It clogs and narrows your arteries. This can trigger chest pain, weakness, heart attack, or stroke. Plaque can rupture and cause clots that block arteries. Completely blocked arteries can cause sudden death.

When your arteries are narrowed and blocked from smoking, you may have other problems, too. Blockages reduce blood flow in your legs and skin. Tissue slowly dies. You may develop skin ulcers. Eventually, your toes, feet, or legs can be so damaged that they must be amputated.



Plaque narrows vessels so less blood can flow through. When a clot forms in one of these narrow places in an artery around the heart, your heart muscle becomes starved for the oxygen it needs.

### Secondhand smoke triggers heart attacks.

Tobacco smoke hurts anyone who breathes it. When you breathe secondhand smoke, platelets in your blood get sticky and may form clots, just like in a person who smokes. New research shows that even spending time in a smoky room could trigger a heart attack. Smoking is not the only cause of these problems, but it makes them much worse.

### Quitting can save your life.

If you already have heart or artery disease, you have years of life to gain by quitting smoking. Your risk for a heart attack drops sharply just 1 year after you quit smoking. After 2 to 5 years, your chance of stroke could fall to about the same as a nonsmoker's. You will feel better and can be more active when cigarettes are gone from your life.

## ... what it means to YOU

**Smoking around others increases their risk for heart attack and death. By not smoking, you help protect your family, friends, and coworkers.**

