

The Effects of Smoking and Alcohol.

How Smoking Cigarettes Harms You.

1. Tobacco smoke contains **many substances** that **damage** living tissue. The sticky **tar** contains chemicals called **carcinogens**. These cause **cancers**, which develop mostly in the **lungs and mouth**.
2. Tobacco smoke contains **carbon monoxide**, a **toxic** gas. The gas combines **irreversibly** with **haemoglobin** in the **red blood cells**, meaning the blood can carry **less oxygen** around the body.

A lack of oxygen to **activate** muscle cells can cause **pain**, such as in the legs when walking. In pregnant women the **foetus** can be **deprived of oxygen**, leading to the baby being born **underweight**.

Carbon monoxide also makes blood vessels **narrower**. Body cells supplied by those blood vessels get even **less oxygen** and may **die** causing dead tissue. The dead tissue easily becomes infected and must be removed. This sometimes involves **amputation**. If the heart gets too little oxygen it can cause **heart disease** or a **heart attack**.

Carbon monoxide and others gases in cigarette smoke can **damage lung tissue** causing respiratory diseases such as **emphysema** and **bronchitis**.

3. Tobacco smoke contains a stimulant drug called **nicotine** that is **very addictive**, which makes it **difficult** to give up smoking.

How Drinking Alcohol Can Harm You.

Alcohol can affect a person **straight away** and in the **future**.

Short term effects of alcohol.

1. Alcohol **slows** down your **reactions** because it's a **depressant**. This can affect your **coordination** so making simple physical tasks difficult.
2. Alcohol can cause **blurred vision** and can **lower inhibitions**, leading sometimes to people doing things they wouldn't normally do.
3. Consuming too much alcohol can cause **unconsciousness** and possible **death** by **choking** on vomit.

Long term effects of alcohol.

1. Alcohol is **poisonous**. The **liver** breaks down the toxic alcohol into harmless substances. Drinking **too much too often** causes the **death** of liver cells, forming **scar tissue** that blocks the **blood flow** through the liver – this is called **cirrhosis**. If the liver can't do its normal job of **cleaning the blood**, dangerous substances can build up and damage the rest of the body.
2. Too much drinking can cause **brain damage**, affecting learning and memory.

It should be made **easier** for doctors to use organs from people who have died. One suggestion is to have an **opt-out system** where anyone's organs can be used **unless** the person has **registered** to say they **don't** want their organs to be donated.

Each year in Britain over 1000 people die waiting for transplants because there is a shortage of organs.