

# Smoking and Your Back

If you smoke, you probably already know about the risks to your heart and lungs. However, your bones are also at tremendous risk. The carbon monoxide in cigarettes prevents proper nutrition from reaching the tissues of your back. It also hinders the flow of oxygen in your muscles, bones, ligaments and tendons. Nicotine causes blood vessel walls to thicken, reducing blood flow.

- Smokers have more low-back pain than nonsmokers, and they are at higher risk for rheumatoid arthritis.
- Studies have shown that smoking increases the risk of developing osteoporosis due to reduced blood supply to bones, reduced absorption of calcium and reduced bone density.
- Smokers have an increased risk of hip, wrist or spine fractures and for developing certain injuries, such as sprains or rotator cuff tears.
- When smokers are injured, it takes longer to heal because nicotine harms cells.
- During surgery, smokers have less favorable outcomes, more complications, and are slower to heal after a surgery.
- Smoking causes the spinal discs to decay over time.



## Good News: Damage is Reversible

People who stop smoking can reduce back pain, decrease chances of further damage and restore blood flow for proper healing. After only two days without cigarettes, the body begins to heal nerve endings and increase blood flow. A recent study of patients undergoing lumbar spine surgery found that if smokers stopped smoking 10 weeks before the surgery, their risk of complications fell to the level of nonsmokers.

After only 20 minutes without a cigarette, your body will begin to change, resulting in lower blood pressure and pulse, and increased temperature in your hands and feet. In eight hours your oxygen level increases to normal and carbon monoxide level drops to normal. After only one day without a cigarette, you will reduce your chance of a heart attack. During the first year to 10 years, you will see dramatic improvements in your health, from circulation to better lung health, reduced fatigue and congestion and more.

Stop smoking today to help reverse the damage of toxins flowing to your bones and muscles. In addition, quitting smoking will dramatically reduce your risk of stroke, heart disease, lung disease, ulcers, and cancers of the prostate, mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix and larynx. Quitting smoking can even play a huge role in improving your sexual functioning.

## Resources

Don't do it alone. Talk to your doctor about your desire to quit. For helpful resources visit the following sites:

[www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

[www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco)

[www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco)

[www.trytostop.org](http://www.trytostop.org)

[www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org)

For additional advice or consultation on spinal problems, you may request a referral from your primary care physician to the Indiana Spine Group. For details, visit [www.indianaspinegroup.com](http://www.indianaspinegroup.com) or call 317.228.7000.

