



Media Release

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Cigarette smoke has immediate and deadly effects

Quit Victoria and partners will today launch a public education campaign highlighting how deadly cigarette smoke is on the heart and the link between smoking and Australia's single biggest killer, heart disease.

The campaign, which will air on free-to-air TV from Sunday night, explains how within minutes of inhaling cigarette smoke, the blood becomes sticky, constricting the artery walls and making it harder to pump blood around the body. Sticky blood increases the chance of blood clots forming in the artery wall which can lead to a catastrophic heart attack very quickly.

A recent Australian [study](#) showed that cardiovascular disease was almost three times higher for current smokers than those that never smoked, while new [data](#) out of the US showed that the earlier people stop smoking the lower their risk of dying from heart disease or stroke.

Dr Sarah White, director of Quit, said regardless of age and life stage, stopping smoking is the single best thing any person who smokes can do to improve their health, and lower their risk of dying from heart disease or stroke.

"Quitting is possible. The best way to stop smoking is with support from Quitline (13 7848) and with stop smoking medications, like the nicotine patch and gum. Call the Quitline today or speak to your GP or visit quit.org.au," said Dr White. "It is never too late to stop smoking, and we hope this campaign will really get this message across."

Director of Cardiology at Western Health and Heart Foundation spokesperson, Associate Professor Nicholas Cox said increasing numbers of younger people are presenting to him after suffering life-threatening events like heart attack, chest pain and coronary heart disease.

"Almost all of the young patients I see who have had a heart attack, smoke cigarettes. The fact is, there is no 'small' heart attack. If you are lucky enough to survive a heart attack, you need to stop smoking. Every time you inhale cigarette smoke, there's an acute and immediate impact on your heart," said Associate Professor Cox.

"Despite advances in medical care, we still see too many young patients with catastrophic heart attacks. We need to do more to help young people understand the immediate risk that smoking poses to their health, and for patients, that it increases their risks of a second heart attack.

"I urge all people who smoke to seek support to help them to quit. Stopping smoking is the single best thing you can do to improve your health."

Ms Kellie-Ann Jolly, Victorian chief executive officer (CEO) of the Heart Foundation said it's vital for people who smoke to know exactly how cigarette smoke directly affects the heart.

"Most people know that smoking increases the risk of developing various cancers, but relatively few people know how cigarette smoke actually clots the blood, which can lead to a heart attack even for people in their 30s and 40s," said Ms Jolly.

"There is no safe level of smoking. Even smoking only one cigarette a day or smoking occasionally significantly increases your chance of heart attack or developing a cardiovascular condition that decreases your quality of life," she said.



Dr Sandro Demaio, CEO of VicHealth, a major funder of Quit, said public health campaigns like this are vital for supporting more people across Victoria to stop smoking.

“One in ten people in Victoria are daily smokers, which equates to at least a half million people who have a much greater risk of dying from heart disease or stroke,” Dr Demaio said.

“Quitting smoking reduces the risk of heart disease dramatically. One year after quitting smoking the risk of a heart attack or stroke is halved. This public health campaign reminds us just how harmful smoking is for our health and how important it is to quit.”

For more quitting advice, visit quit.org.au or call the Quitline on 13 7848 between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday. Quitline is a culturally inclusive telephone service for all, including the [LGBTIQ+ community](#). [Aboriginal Quitline](#) counsellors are also available.

For more on the Sticky Blood campaign, visit quit.org.au/stickyblood or to access the **media hub visit** quit.org.au/stickybloodmedia.

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Quit Victoria is a partnership between VicHealth, the State Government of Victoria and Cancer Council Victoria. For more information, visit: quit.org.au

Cardiovascular disease and smoking

- Smoking damages your heart as well as your lungs.
- In 2019 [10.2 per cent of Victorians](#) smoked daily.
- People who smoke are almost [three times more likely to die from heart attack](#) and more than twice as likely to die of stroke, compared to people who have never smoked.
- Exposure to second-hand smoke [increases the risk of heart disease by around 30 per cent](#).
- There is no safe level of smoking. Even smoking between [one and four cigarettes a day](#) dramatically increases the risk of dying of heart disease or developing a cardiovascular condition that greatly reduces your quality of life.
- Quitting smoking quickly reduces the risks of heart disease. When people quit smoking, there are both immediate and long-term health benefits.
- Within 2-3 months of quitting smoking, blood is less sticky, and the risk of heart attack continues to fall over time.
- One year after quitting smoking, [the risk of a heart attack or stroke is reduced by half](#), and in five to 15 years, the risk of stroke and coronary heart disease returns to the level of someone who has never smoked.
- People thinking about quitting smoking should speak with their doctor or call the Quitline on 13 7848 or visit quit.org.au.