

Smokers generally unaware that quitting smoking will reduce risk of dementia

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Smokers are being urged to give quitting a go ahead of No Smoking Day (8th March), as research shows those who smoke are more likely to develop dementia.

The annual awareness day encourages smokers to make a quit attempt and this year's theme is "stopping smoking protects your [brain health](#)."

According to Alzheimer's Research UK, dementia is the most feared health condition for people over the age of 55—more than any other life-threatening disease including cancer and diabetes.

Yet YouGov data commissioned by Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) revealed just 18% of people who smoke know that smoking increases the risk of dementia, compared to more than 70% who know that smoking causes lung diseases or cancers.

Smoking raises the risk of developing dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease and [vascular dementia](#), as it harms the vascular system (heart and blood vessels) and the brain. Studies also suggest that quitting smoking reduces this risk substantially, and smoking has been identified as one of twelve risk factors that if eliminated entirely, could collectively prevent or delay up to 40% of dementia cases.

However, recent data from Alzheimer's Research UK shows only a third of UK adults know there are things they can do to help reduce their risk of dementia, and stopping smoking is one of them.

Dr. Chi Udeh-Momoh, a neuroscientist and dementia prevention expert based at Imperial College London, said, "If you smoke, quitting is perhaps the most important step you can take to protect both your heart and your brain. It really can be life-changing."

"Many people know that smoking affects the heart and [blood vessels](#), increasing the risk of conditions like high blood pressure and stroke. But fewer realize that these conditions, in turn, increase the risk of dementia, or that the chemicals in [cigarette smoke](#) can speed up the natural aging of the brain."

"It's fantastic that brain health is the theme of No Smoking Day 2023. Initiatives like this are so important in raising awareness of the steps we can take to help keep the brain healthy."

Deborah Arnott, Chief Executive of Action on Smoking and Health, who is helping to co-ordinate this year's No Smoking Day, said, "Quitting smoking is one of the best ways to improve your health. It has been shown to reduce the risk of developing dementia, heart disease, cancer and stroke. You experience [health benefits](#) within weeks of stopping, breathing easier and feeling fitter.

"No Smoking Day is the perfect time to quit smoking when thousands of other people are stopping too. There are many ways to stop from [nicotine replacement therapy](#) to vaping and free local support to stop smoking. Smokers are three times more likely to succeed in quitting with help from a trained professional than with willpower alone."

Hilary Evans, Chief Executive of Alzheimer's Research UK, said, "Just a third of people realize that we can take steps to help reduce our risk of developing dementia in later life. This has to change, which is why improving people's understanding of the things that they can do to shape their brain health is a real priority for Alzheimer's Research UK."

"We're delighted to be working alongside ASH to shine a light on the link between smoking and brain [health](#). We hope the [positive message](#) that quitting [smoking](#) at any point can help reduce your [dementia](#) risk gives people who smoke fresh motivation to quit this No Smoking Day."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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