

# Fastfacts

## Young adults and tobacco

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### Smoking rates

- 21% of 16-24 year olds in Scotland smoked cigarettes in 2015 (20% men, 23% women)
- very few adults start smoking, 99% of first cigarette use occurs by the age of 26
- two-thirds of adult smokers in the UK say they started smoking regularly before the age of 18, while two-fifths say they started before the age of 16
- many individual, environmental and social factors influence the decision to smoke or not smoke

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### Health and stopping smoking

- between a half to two thirds of smokers who do not manage to quit will be killed by their addiction
- nicotine is as addictive as heroin or cocaine
- it is a common misconception that smoking relieves stress, anxiety and low mood
- giving up smoking will improve a person's health and well-being and reduce exposure to second-hand smoke for those around them
- 68% of Scottish smokers say they would like to stop smoking
- tobacco has obvious financial costs as well as health costs for young smokers. A typical pack of 20 cigarettes costs £9.40 so a 20-a-day smoker who quits will save over £3,400 a year!

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### Second-hand smoke

- other people's smoke is more than a nuisance - it's known to cause cancer
- living with a smoker increases a non-smoker's chances of developing lung cancer by 20 - 30%
- second-hand smoke immediately affects the heart, blood vessels, and blood circulation in a harmful way and over time can cause heart disease, strokes, and heart attacks

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### The tobacco industry

- the tobacco industry cynically targeted young adults calling them 'replacement smokers'
- the tobacco industry claimed that advertising only encourages existing smokers to switch between brands but many years of research shows that advertising and tobacco promotion encourages young people to experiment with smoking, and increases their chances of becoming smokers
- major life changes which often occur during young adulthood were viewed by the tobacco industry as great opportunities to promote its products

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### Environmental impacts

- smoking related litter is the most common type of litter on the streets of Scotland
- cigarette filters can take up to 12 years to degrade
- cigarette butts leak toxins that contaminate water and harm marine life and the environment
- cigarette filters have been found in the stomachs of fish, birds, whales and other marine creatures, who mistake them for food.