

# ANATOMY OF A CIGARETTE

**There's more to a tab than shredded tobacco. When someone sparks up, the smoke contains almost 4000 chemicals, many of which are harmful to health.**

Of all the stuff crammed into a smoke, the three biggest harmful components are nicotine, carbon monoxide and tar.

## **NICOTINE**

The damage to health may be caused by the tar and poisonous chemicals, but it's the nicotine in tobacco which smokers can grow to depend upon.

Nicotine is a powerful and fast-acting stimulant drug. In small doses, it speeds up heart rate and increases blood pressure. This makes smokers feel more alert when they light up, while the brain activates a 'reward' system which is thought to be responsible for the pleasurable, relaxing 'hit' they describe.

## **TAR**

70% of the tar present in tobacco smoke gets dumped into the lungs. It contains many substances which have been linked with cancer, as well as irritants that cause the narrow airways inside the lungs to get inflamed and clogged with mucus. Low tar fags also contain just as much of the other poisons.

## **CARBON MONOXIDE**

This is a poisonous gas found in high concentration in cigarette smoke, not to mention the stuff which coughs out of car exhaust pipes. Once inside the lungs, the carbon atoms grab any passing haemoglobin (the oxygen forming substance found in the blood) and basically take a joy ride around the body.

Someone who smokes 20 a day can have a carbon monoxide level which is 5-10 times that of a non-smoker. This deprives the body of oxygen, which makes the blood sticky and can cause problems with the growth, repair and exchange of healthy nutrients.

Ultimately, carbon monoxide can mess up electrical activity in the heart and encourage fatty deposits to clog up artery walls.

## **BIZARRE CHEMICALS PRESENT IN TOBACCO SMOKE:**

- 69 distinct cancer-causing chemicals.
- Formaldehyde: used for pickling things in jars.
- Acetone: found in nail varnish.
- Ammonia: used in fertiliser.
- Hydrogen sulphide: smells of rotten eggs.
- Polonium: a radioactive component
- Arsenic: a killer poison

# WHAT'S THE DRAW?

What is it about sucking on a smouldering tube of tobacco that gets nearly one third of all people under 24 lighting up on a regular basis? The fact is every smoker lights up for different reasons. Here are some of the burning factors:

## **MOOD CONTROL**

Nicotine has a stimulating effect on the body. Even so, many people believe that reaching for the cigarettes helps keep them calm, relieving stress and feelings of nervousness. So while the act of puffing on a smoke might distract them mentally, the physical changes actually work against them.

## **THE WEIGHT MYTH**

Many people buy into the belief that smoking keeps their weight down, or even helps them to slim. This is a basically a myth, and a dangerous one at that.

Nicotine may well take the edge from your appetite, but smokers who quit don't automatically pack on the pounds. Any weight gain is down to the fact that they tend to eat more as a substitute for smoking.