

# Supporting patients to stop smoking: a guide for GPs



This guide was developed to assist GPs to motivate and support patients to stop smoking. This is a general guide subject to the clinician's judgement for each individual patient. This guide is based on the best available evidence and expert consensus (May 2017). The pharmacotherapy protocol is based on the RACGP's 'Pharmacotherapy treatment algorithm'<sup>1</sup>.

**Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Australia.**

**1:33 GP conversations about smoking result in the patient quitting<sup>2</sup>**

## Smoking causes:

- **Cancers:** 13% of all cancers in Australia
- **Chronic pulmonary obstructive disorder**
- **Cardiovascular disease**
- **Upper respiratory tract infections**
- **Reduced fertility** for both men and women
- **Peripheral artery disease**
- **Erectile dysfunction**
- **Ulcers** in the stomach and duodenum
- **Dental decay and gum disease**
- **Psychological distress**, with smokers twice as likely to feel tired, nervous and sad
- **Pregnancy complications**, including increased risk of miscarriage, premature birth, ectopic pregnancy, placental abruption

## Smoking also increases the risk of:

- **Cancer treatments** being less successful and causing worse side-effects
- **Surgery complications**, including slower wound healing, increased infection, and breathing difficulties during general anaesthetic
- **Cardiac rehabilitation** being less successful

*Adults exposed to secondhand smoke in the home or workplace also risk the health issues and complications listed above.*

## Children exposed to secondhand smoke in the home are more likely to experience:

- **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome**
- **Middle ear infections**
- **Asthma** and other breathing problems
- **Chest infections**

## Smoking in Victoria

- Approximately 11.9% of Victorians smoke cigarettes daily, down from 17.3% ten years ago
- Smoking rates are higher in communities with socioeconomic disadvantage, but the smoking prevalence gap between high and low socioeconomic status is decreasing
- Smoking rates are much higher in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, people with mental illness or substance use disorders, and other highly disadvantaged groups
- More than 80% of Australians who smoke want to quit, and approximately 50% of smokers attempt to quit each year
- Victorians now smoke, on average, 11 cigarettes per day, which is equivalent to spending more than \$5,000 per annum on tobacco<sup>3</sup>

### References:

1. RACGP Clinical guidelines - Supporting smoking cessation [www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/guidelines/smoking-cessation/](http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/guidelines/smoking-cessation/)
2. Stead, Bergson & Lancaster *Cochr Database Syst Review* (2008); (2)
3. Victorian Smoking & Health Survey 2015. CBRC Research Paper Series No. 47. Cancer Council Victoria [www.cancervic.org.au/research/behavioural/research-papers](http://www.cancervic.org.au/research/behavioural/research-papers)

