



# Health Matters

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Stopping smoking:  
What works?





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## Stopping smoking: What works?

### 1. Smoking rates are falling

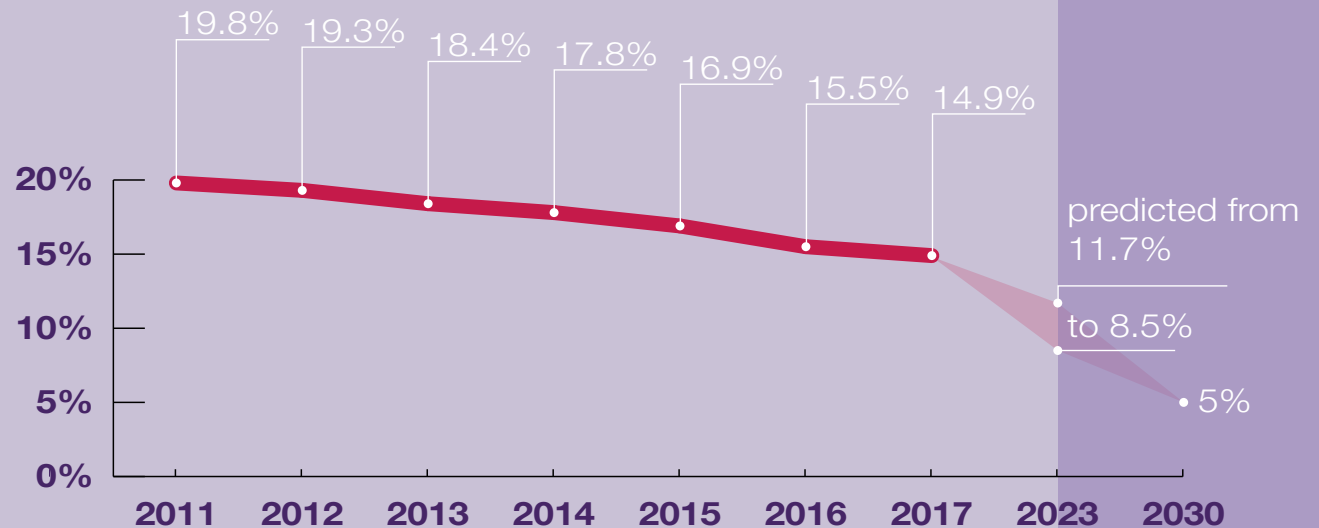
Smoking is the leading cause of preventable illness and premature death in England, with about half of all life-long smokers dying prematurely, losing on average around 10 years of life.

In 2016 alone, there were around 78,000 deaths attributable to smoking, representing 16% of all deaths across the UK.

The adult smoking rate in England is continuing to decline year on year and is now at a record low. In 2017, 14.9% of people in England aged 18 years and above smoked, accounting for 6.1 million people.

If this trend continues it will reduce to between 8.5% and 11.7% by 2023.

### Smoking prevalence in England is at a record low



Current data from 2011 to 2017



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### 2. The evidence on nicotine

Perhaps the greatest obstacle we face is the widespread misconception amongst smokers and health professional that most of the harm of smoking comes for the nicotine.

While nicotine is the addictive substance in cigarettes, it is relatively harmless. In fact, almost all of the harm from smoking comes from the thousands of other chemicals in tobacco smoke, many of which are toxic.

Given these misperceptions, advising smokers on the relative risks of nicotine containing products compared to smoked tobacco is an integral part of supporting them to quit.

People should be advised to use NRT, or an e-cigarette if they choose, as much they need to help them manage their cravings when they stop smoking. Insufficient nicotine replacement and premature cessation of it are both associated with relapse to smoking.

**4 in 10** smokers and ex-smokers **mistakenly believe** that nicotine in cigarettes is the cause of most of the smoking-related cancer

**3** main causes of mortality from smoking are:

Lung

COPD

Cardiovascular disease

**None** are caused primarily by nicotine



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## 3. Smoking and health inequalities

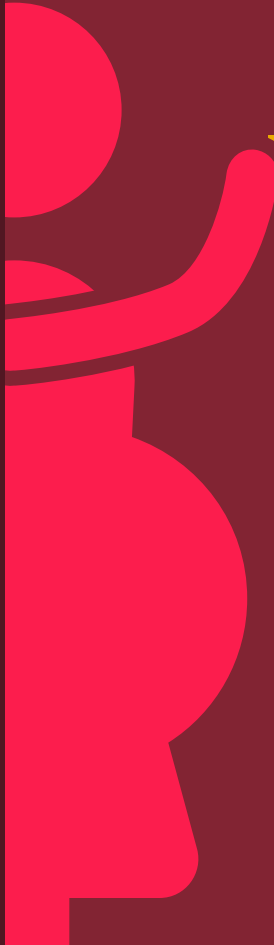
As smoking prevalence has declined, it has become increasingly concentrated among more disadvantaged communities and groups.

Around 1 in 4 people in routine and manual occupations smoke, compared with 1 in 10 people in managerial and professional occupations, and people who are unemployed are almost twice as likely to smoke as those in work.

Smoking during pregnancy is also a major health inequality, with prevalence varying significantly across communities and social groups.

Figures from NHS Digital show that 10.8% of women are known to be smokers at time of delivery. In some areas this is as high as 1 in 4.

## Smoking in pregnancy



### Smoking

during pregnancy causes up to:

**2,200** premature births,  
**5,000** miscarriages and  
**300** perinatal deaths every year in the UK.

It also increases the risk of complications in pregnancy and of the child developing a number of conditions later on in life such as:



premature birth



low birth weight



problems of ear, nose and throat



respiratory conditions



obesity



diabetes



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### 4. Evidence on E-cigarettes

Leading UK health and public health organisations now agree that although not risk free, e-cigarettes are far less harmful than smoking.

Public Health England and the Royal College of Physicians estimate the risk reduction to be at least 95%.

In 2018 so far, three major US reports (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, American Cancer Society and the US Annual Review of Public Health) have found that e-cigarettes are substantially less harmful than smoking.

Local stop smoking services have an important role to play in supporting smokers who want to use an e-cigarette in their quit attempt. Yet currently, only around 4% of those using stop smoking services are using an e-cigarette in their quit attempt.

Just under **2.5 million** people use an **E-cigarette** in England:



**600,000**  
smokers who  
vape with **no plan**  
to quit smoking



**600,000**  
who are vaping  
as a **means**  
to quit



**1.2 million**  
vapers who have now  
quit smoking, not  
including **over three  
quarters of a million**  
who have **quit**  
**vaping and smoking**



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## 5. Call to action

Around 60% of all people who smoke are intending to quit, 11% of which aim to do so within 3 months.

Currently, nearly 60% of smokers still try to quit unaided and using willpower alone, despite this being the least effective method.

Getting support can greatly increase a person's chances of quitting successfully.

Stoptober provides an ideal opportunity to engage with smokers. There's a range of materials available to support healthcare professionals, including guidance on starting conversations and other campaign material that can be used in GP practices, pharmacies, and hospital and community care settings.

For full references see:  
[www.gov.uk/government/collections/health-matters-public-health-issues](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/health-matters-public-health-issues)

