



THE TRUTH ABOUT TOBACCO



Why Smoking
Tobacco Isn't
Just "A Habit"

It's a Setup!





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Opening message

Tobacco doesn't come into your life like some villain trying to ruin everything. It often seems cool, like the thing to do, just one puff, everyone's doing it, or when you're stressed out and need a break.

But here's the real deal. Tobacco takes more than it gives back. It doesn't just touch your lungs, it corrupts them. It starves your body of oxygen, steals your stamina, and makes simple things like running, studying, or even breathing feel heavier over time. And nicotine is the bait. It kicks in quick, hits deep, and grabs your brain faster than TikTok at 2 AM. The industry markets it loud, colourful, and tempting, then enjoys the profit while your potential pays the price.



Let's be straight, the tobacco industry is not on your team. They see teens as targets, not trailblazers. They box you into habits, drain your money that could be your glow-up funds, blur your focus, and sneak limitations into dreams that deserve zero interference.

At the Customs Anti Narcotic Unit, we don't just go after seizures, drug traffickers, and smuggling rings. We fight to protect the freedom of your future, not just the borders of this country. You are the generation with the sharpest minds, the loudest voices, and the biggest futures ahead of you.

So, listen up, saying no to tobacco isn't a loss. It's an act of rebellion against an industry that profits from dependence. It's discipline in motion. It's self-respect in 4K. It's keeping your lungs clear, your confidence untouched, your mind focused, your energy lit, your bag full, and your future unlocked.

You're not weak for being curious. Curiosity is intelligence. But acting on curiosity without truth is where the trap wins. And you are smarter than the trap.

Remember this: Tobacco isn't the wave. Your potential is. Protect it like the valuable asset it is. Don't let a stick hold back the story you're meant to own. Stay alert. Stay strong. Keep winning. Big love. Greater awareness. The brightest future possible. Let's keep Guyanese youth sharp, safe, and unbeatable.

James Singh

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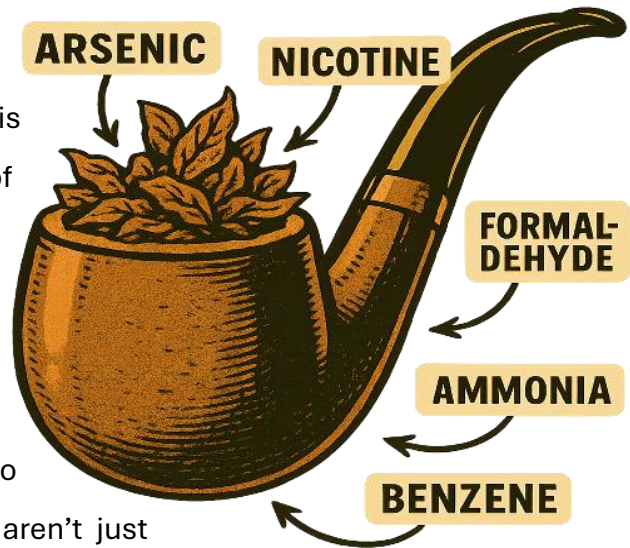
Director,

CUSTOMS ANTI NARCOTIC UNIT



What tobacco actually is

Tobacco isn't just dried leaves. It's a whole chemical cocktail designed to hit your body hard. Before it ever reaches you, tobacco is soaked, treated, and mixed with hundreds of added chemicals, and when it burns or gets heated in a vape, it creates thousands more. So, when someone says tobacco is "natural," remember it's basically a lab-made mix of toxins wrapped in flavours to make it look harmless. Tobacco products aren't just



“cigarettes.” They’re anything that has tobacco or nicotine in it, from vapes, e-cigarettes, chew,

pouches, gummies, and even those harmless-looking nicotine toothpicks. But they all harm your body.

Smoking or using any of these products can trigger or worsen serious health problems, and it doesn't just affect you.

Regular cigarettes blast toxic smoke into the air, and the people around you end up breathing it in. Vapes aren't safe either. The clouds might smell nice, but they still contain chemicals that others inhale.

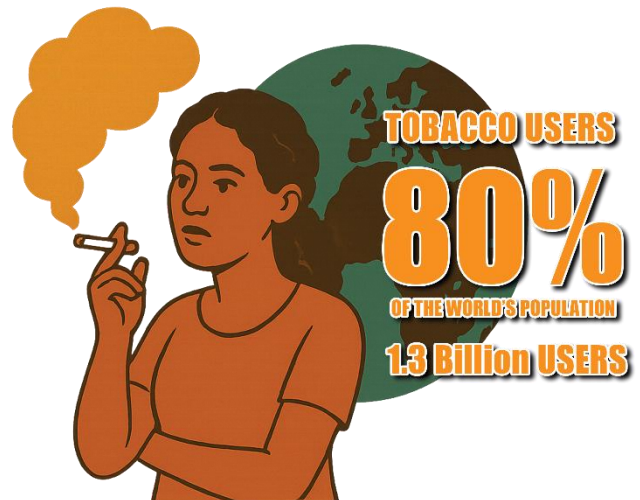


The Real Facts

Whether it's smoked, chewed, puffed, or disguised as candy, tobacco hits your health and the people around you harder than you think. You're not just taking in smoke or vapour, you are actually inhaling things like nicotine, which is the addictive hook, ammonia, which is found in cleaning products, formaldehyde, which is used to preserve dead bodies, arsenic, which is rat poison, tar, the sticky sludge that coats your lungs, and heavy metals like lead. These ingredients aren't accidents. Companies add them to make the product taste better, hit faster, burn slower, and keep you addicted.

World Facts

Tobacco use isn't just A **“grown-up problem”**. It's a **global issue** that hits low and middle-income countries the hardest, where about **80%** of the world's population, approximately **1.3 billion** users, worldwide, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Big companies like Philip Morris International, British American Tobacco, and Altria make billions from selling



**TOBACCO KILLS
OVER
7 MILLION
PEOPLE
EVERY
YEAR**



these products. At the same time, most tobacco farming now happens in developing countries such as **China, India, Brazil, Zimbabwe, and Indonesia** (FAO, 2020). Even though the industry hosts huge trade shows like World Tobacco Middle East and World Tobacco Asia, the reality is that tobacco kills over **7 million** people every year, including **1.6 million** non-

smokers who just breathed in second-hand smoke (WHO). That's why the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the MPOWER strategies were created to help countries monitor tobacco use, protect people from second-hand smoke, support quitting, **warn the public, stop tobacco advertising, and raise taxes to reduce demand.**

Tobacco Use in Guyana

In Guyana, 2025 showed that people are fighting back. The Ministry of Health launched the Global Youth Tobacco Survey to track teen use, boosted quit-smoking clinics, and worked with the Guyana Revenue Authority to crack down on smuggled cigarettes. Adult smoking rates dropped to around **10.8 – 10.9%**, with men smoking more than women, but overall showing a slow decline thanks to stronger laws and more awareness, according to Statista, MOH Guyana. Currently, the total number of smokers in Guyana is estimated at approximately 63,000 individuals.

The tobacco market still brought in **about US\$14.4 million**, but use is trending downward. Schools, universities, and health agencies continue to raise awareness, especially since the tobacco industry keeps targeting youth and low-income communities with aggressive marketing, according to Tobacco Atlas. With tobacco linked to diseases like **cancer, heart disease, and kidney problems**, Guyana has been pushing hard to meet **global anti-tobacco goals and protect young people from getting hooked**. Most of all, data shows that smoking caused about **4%** of all deaths in Guyana. Breaking it down by gender, it's around **8% for males** and **2.1% for females**.

This booklet exists for one reason. That is to give you the facts that protect health, safeguard futures, and save lives. Tobacco remains one of the leading preventable causes of disease and death worldwide, and young people are among the most targeted and most affected. Understanding how tobacco products work, how the industry markets them, and how they impact the body is essential for making informed decisions.

This booklet is an important part of that mission, helping ensure that you have the knowledge needed to stay safe, stay aware, and protect your long-term well-being.

Tobacco Control Laws in Guyana - What You Need to Know

Guyana got serious about tobacco in 2005. On December 14, 2005, Guyana joined the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Basically, it's a promise to protect people, especially young people, from the harms of tobacco.

Smoke-Free Spaces

Smoking isn't allowed in places where people need clean air to breathe. That includes:

- All indoor public places
- All indoor workplaces
- Buses and public transport
- Hospitals, clinics, schools, and day-care centres
- Bus stops and public waiting areas
- Parks and playgrounds
- Anywhere within 5 metres of doors or windows of public buildings

Less second-hand smoke, fewer health problems, and safer spaces for everyone.

No Tobacco Ads or Sponsorships

Tobacco companies aren't allowed to:

- Advertise cigarettes or vapes
- Promote tobacco products
- Sponsor events, teams, or activities

Because ads are designed to make smoking look cool when it's actually harmful.

Packaging Must Tell the Truth

- Cigarette and tobacco packs can't lie anymore.
- Big picture and text warnings must cover 60% of the front and back of the pack.
- Words like "light", "mild", or "low tar" are banned because they're fake safety claims.
- Companies can't show numbers for tar, nicotine, or carbon monoxide to make products look "less dangerous"

The message is clear. There is no safe tobacco.

Price & Taxes

- Health experts say tobacco should be expensive so fewer people start using it.
- The World Health Organization recommends high tobacco taxes
- In Guyana, tobacco taxes are still lower than recommended, which makes cigarettes more affordable than they should be

Lower prices mean easier access, resulting in more people getting hooked.

FACT

Guyana has strong laws to protect young people from tobacco, but the industry still finds ways to push its products. Knowing the rules helps you see through the tricks and make smarter choices. Remember, not smoking isn't missing out. It's staying in control.

Tobacco Products: Cigarettes, Vapes & Emerging Novel Products

Inside Every Cigarette

Most people think a cigarette is just tobacco wrapped in paper, but the reality is far more dangerous. Every cigarette contains a complex mix of chemicals, many of which are toxic, poisonous, or linked to life-threatening diseases. When a cigarette burns, it produces thousands of chemicals, including substances also found in rat poison, car exhaust, nail polish remover, and even chemicals used to preserve dead bodies. These ingredients are not accidental; many are added intentionally to make the cigarette burn a certain way or to make the nicotine hit faster and harder, increasing the risk of addiction. Understanding what is actually inside a cigarette is one of the most important steps toward recognising the serious harm tobacco causes. This section breaks down the hidden chemicals, where they are usually found, and why they pose such a major threat to your health and the health of people around you.



Roll-ups



CIGAR



BEEDI



KRETEK PIPE SMOKING



ROLLIES AND ROLL-UPS



ROLL-YOUR-OWN AND CIGI



DRIED TOBACCO LEAVES
ALSO KNOWN AS "FRONTO"



CRUSHED DRIED
TOBACCO LEAVES
KNOWN AS "GRABBA"
OR "HOT-GRABBA"

DRIED TOBACCO LEAVES: often sold as fronto, are used for rolling, but many people also use them to wrap cannabis. Because these leaves contain high levels of nicotine, often more than regular cigarettes, mixing or rolling cannabis with them can lead to stronger nicotine exposure, higher addiction risk, and more harmful effects on your health.

CRUSHED DRIED TOBACCO LEAVES: Crushed dried tobacco leaves, known as grabba, are shredded tobacco often mixed with cannabis to make the smoke stronger. Because they contain high levels of nicotine, grabba makes the mix more addictive, harsher on the lungs, and exposes you to the same dangerous chemicals found in cigarettes. Many teens don't realise that adding grabba turns a joint into something just as risky as smoking tobacco.

Novel Tobacco Products

Novel tobacco products are new or emerging forms of tobacco and nicotine that are designed to look modern, feel trendy, or appear “safer” than traditional cigarettes, even though they still carry serious health risks. These products often use sleek designs, flavours, or technology to appeal to young people and new users. Even though they may look harmless, many of these products still deliver high doses of nicotine, contain harmful chemicals, and are highly addictive. Many lack long-term research, so their full health impacts remain unknown. What is clear, however, is that these products are often designed



to bypass existing tobacco laws, attract young users, and keep people hooked.

Common examples of novel tobacco products include Heated tobacco products, like IQOS, which use technology that “heats” tobacco, Nicotine pouches, Nicotine gummies and toothpicks; Disposable vapes with high nicotine levels; flavoured herbal shisha mixes (often mislabelled as “nicotine-free”), and Synthetic nicotine products.

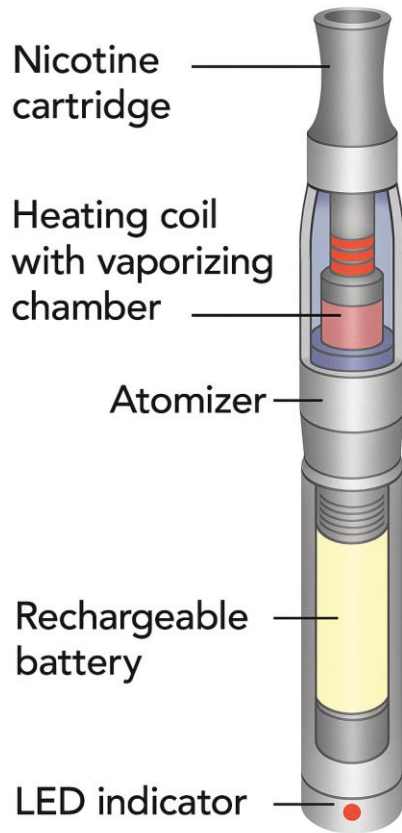
Novel tobacco products might look cool or “safer,” but they hit your body just like cigarettes, sometimes even harder. Vapes, pouches, gummies, and heated sticks all pump nicotine into your system fast, which messes with your focus, mood, sleep, and stress levels. Your brain’s still developing, so you get addicted way quicker than adults. These products also pack chemicals that irritate your lungs, throat, and heart, and the truth is, no one even knows the long-term damage yet. Companies make them look harmless on purpose, but the reality is “If it contains nicotine, it can hook you”, “If it hooks you, it can hurt you”.

E-Cigarettes/ Vapes



E-cigarettes and vapes are devices that heat a liquid to create an aerosol you inhale. That aerosol isn't "just vapour". It usually contains nicotine, flavour chemicals, and tiny particles that can irritate and damage your lungs. Many vapes have more nicotine than a pack of cigarettes, which means you can get addicted faster without even realising it. Vapes are often sold in bright colours and sweet flavours to look harmless, but inside they can contain chemicals linked to breathing problems, heart strain, and long-term lung damage. Even "nicotine-free" vapes can still expose you to toxic ingredients and unknown health risks. Vapes aren't harmless. They're just another way to get hooked on nicotine, and the effects hit teens harder. They are also known as e-cigs, electronic cigars, electronic hookah, e-hookah, hookah sticks, personal vaporisers, mechanical mods, vape pens, & vaping devices.

What's Inside Of E-Cigarettes/ Vapes



NICOTINE: insecticides and fumigants



LEAD: batteries



FORMALDEHYDE: embalming dead bodies



BENZENE: rubber cement



TOULENE: embalmers' glue



PROPYLENE GLYCOL: paint, lotion, anti-freeze



VEGETABLE GLYCERIN: suppositories



FLAVORING: natural and artificial

How nicotine traps your brain

Nicotine is not just something you smoke. It's a psychoactive drug engineered to lock onto your brain like a key sliding into the perfect lock. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), when you inhale it, nicotine reaches your brain in about 10 seconds, faster than most drugs and way faster than your brain can even think about what's happening. Once it gets there, it

attaches to nicotinic acetylcholine receptors, the same receptors your brain uses for



Your brain releases a huge dopamine surge

learning, focus, and memory. The National Institute on Drug Abuse explains that the moment

You feel calm for a moment



favourite food,

nicotine hits those receptors, your brain fires off a huge dopamine surge, the same chemical that shows up when you eat your favourite food, win a game, or get a ton of likes online.

That quick hit of dopamine makes you feel calm or focused for a moment, but it crashes just as fast. And here's the dangerous part is, your brain hates the crash. So, it starts demanding

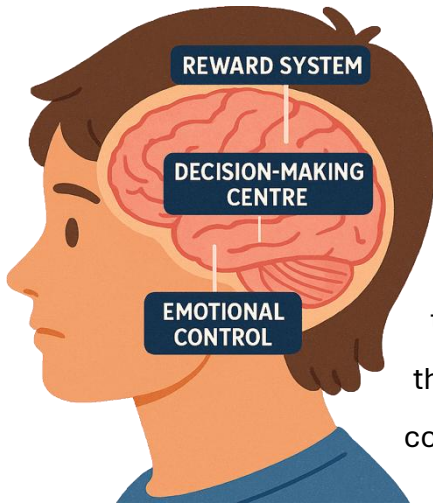


The effect disappears fast

more nicotine to get that same feeling again. Over time, your brain stops making enough dopamine on its own and starts depending on nicotine to feel normal. This is why people don't keep smoking or vaping because they "want to", they keep doing it because their brain has been chemically trained to crave the next hit.

Your brain demands more





For teens, the risk is way worse. Your brain is still developing until around age 25, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. That means your reward system, decision-making centre, and emotional control are all still under construction. The Surgeon General's Report on Youth & Tobacco Use states that nicotine jumps into that vulnerable stage and rewires things, it builds stronger addiction pathways, weakens impulse control, increases anxiety, and can even change how you experience stress and pleasure. Studies show teens get addicted faster and have a harder time quitting than adults because their brains are more sensitive to dopamine spikes.

Nicotine doesn't calm you, it creates the stress, then sells you the temporary escape. It makes you think you're in control, but the science shows it's actually pulling the strings. Understanding how nicotine rewires the teenage brain isn't just knowledge. It's your power to break the trap before it tightens.



The real health damage

Effects of smoking on your body

Smoking causes or increases your risk of:

- Macular degeneration.
- Cataracts.
- Vision loss.

- Reduced taste and smell.
- Tooth staining.
- Tooth decay.
- Gum disease.

- Frequent infections.
- COPD.

- Erectile dysfunction.
- Infertility.



- Miscarriage.
- Birth defects.
- Developmental delays.

- Anxiety.
- Depression.
- Irritability.

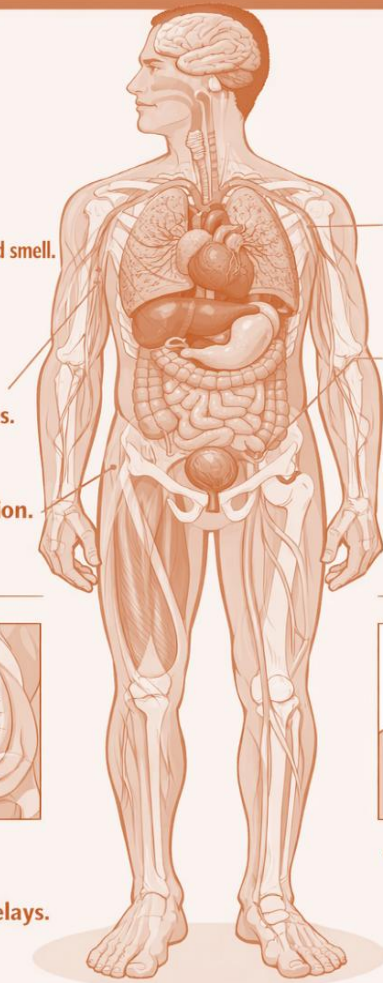
- Blood clots.
- Heart attack.
- Stroke.

- Bone fractures.
- Osteoporosis.

- Premature aging.
- Yellow nails.
- Wrinkles.



- Lung, oral, laryngeal and other cancers.



Tobacco starts harming your body right away, not years later. The chemicals in cigarettes, vapes, and other tobacco products quickly get into your blood, where nicotine makes your nervous system react. You can feel this as your heart beating faster, your blood pressure rising, and trouble breathing. Irritants in the smoke irritate your airways, causing coughing, chest tightness, and making it harder to breathe, especially during sports or

exercise when your body needs oxygen the most. Nicotine and other chemicals also mess with your skin's natural renewal process and blood flow, leading to acne, dull skin, and early signs of ageing.

At the same time, long-term biological damage begins with every exposure. Tobacco smoke and aerosols introduce carcinogens that trigger DNA mutations, significantly increasing the risk of lung cancer and other cancers over time. The cardiovascular system is forced into continuous stress, raising the risk of heart disease and stroke. Reproductive health is also affected: tobacco reduces sperm quality in males, disrupts hormone balance in females, and increases







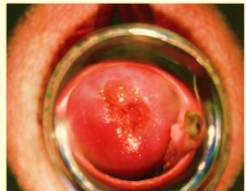


the risk of infertility in both. Chronic inflammation and airway damage lead to lifelong breathing problems, including COPD.

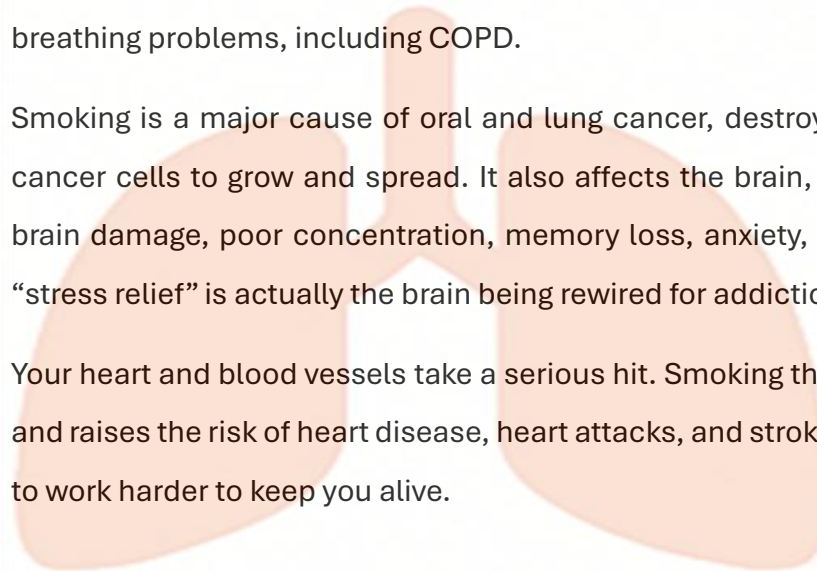
Smoking is a major cause of oral and lung cancer, destroying healthy tissue and allowing cancer cells to grow and spread. It also affects the brain, increasing the risk of long-term brain damage, poor concentration, memory loss, anxiety, and depression. What feels like “stress relief” is actually the brain being rewired for addiction.

Your heart and blood vessels take a serious hit. Smoking thickens blood, damages arteries, and raises the risk of heart disease, heart attacks, and strokes. Over time, the heart is forced to work harder to keep you alive.

Effects of smoking on your body

Smoking causes or increases your risk of:

 <p style="text-align: center;">ORAL CANCER</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">LUNG CANCER</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">BRAIN DAMAGE</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">HEART DISEASES</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">CATARACTS</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">SKIN WRINKLING</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">CERVICAL CANCER AND MISCARRIAGE</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">PSORIASIS</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">DISCOLOURED FINGERS</p>



Smoking also shows on the outside. Skin wrinkling, premature ageing, and discoloured fingers happen because smoking reduces blood flow and breaks down collagen. The body literally ages faster. Eyes are affected too. Smoking increases the risk of cataracts, which can lead to vision loss and blindness.

For women, smoking increases the risk of cervical cancer, miscarriage, and serious complications during pregnancy.

Conditions like psoriasis are also worsened by smoking, as it fuels inflammation and weakens the immune system, making it harder for the body to heal.

The truth is simple. Smoking doesn't just shorten life. It damages how you live it. These



effects aren't rare or exaggerated. They're common, preventable, and real. Quitting isn't a weakness. It's taking back control of your body, your health, and your future.

Even in young adults, tobacco accelerates cellular ageing, leading to premature wrinkles and early skin deterioration.

From a public-health perspective, tobacco use among teens is especially concerning because the adolescent body is still developing, making it more vulnerable to nicotine dependence and physiological

harm. The damage does not wait for adulthood. It begins immediately and compounds with every use, shaping long-term health outcomes in preventable ways.

Secondhand & Thirdhand Smoke



Exposure to tobacco doesn't require you to be the one holding the cigarette or vape.

Second-hand smoke: the mixture of smoke exhaled by a user and the smoke released from the burning product, which contains thousands of chemicals, including carcinogens, fine particles, and heavy metals. When inhaled by non-smokers, especially children and teens, these toxins irritate the lungs, trigger inflammation, and reduce normal lung development. Research consistently shows that young people exposed to second-hand smoke have higher rates of asthma attacks, bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections, and decreased lung growth. Even brief exposure can cause immediate changes in blood vessel function, increasing cardiovascular strain like that seen in active smokers.



Thirdhand smoke is a newer but equally concerning public-health issue. These are the toxic residues that settle on clothing, furniture, walls, bedding, hair, skin, and car interiors long after the smoke has disappeared. Nicotine from these residues reacts with common indoor pollutants to form additional carcinogens, posing a risk to anyone who touches contaminated surfaces or inhales dust particles, especially infants, young children, and teens in shared spaces. Because these chemical residues accumulate over time, they can create a persistent exposure environment, even in places where smoking is no longer occurring.

From a public-health standpoint, the harm caused by secondhand and thirdhand smoke contradicts the claim that “I’m only hurting myself.” Tobacco use spreads dangerous chemicals throughout homes, vehicles, schools, and social environments, putting family members, friends, and younger children at risk for respiratory illness, disrupted development, more frequent infections, and long-term health complications. Protecting youth from tobacco means addressing not only direct use but also the environments where they live, learn, and grow.

Smoking doesn't fix stress

A lot of teens reach for a cigarette or vape because life feels like too much. Exams stacking up, pressure at home, anxiety that won't chill, or the constant push to fit in. And it's easy to believe that nicotine helps you relax. But here's the truth: nicotine doesn't calm your stress... it creates it.

The moment nicotine hits your system, your body switches to alert mode. Your heart races. Your stress hormones spike. Your brain gets a quick rush, but then the nicotine wears off, and the tension hits even harder. That



uncomfortable feeling isn't life being stressful. It's nicotine withdrawal. So, you vape or smoke again, and suddenly you feel better. But that relief is temporary. It's just the withdrawal calming down for a moment.

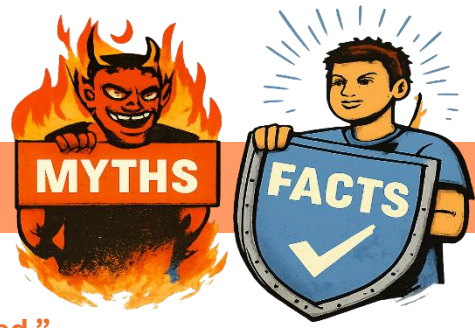
It's basically like setting your own house on fire so you can feel good about putting it out. The problem is that the fire never stops. Every time nicotine leaves your body, the stress returns stronger. That's how addiction starts. Not because you're weak, but because nicotine is designed to hook you by messing with your emotions and your brain chemistry.

Real stress control doesn't come from a vape hit; it comes from coping skills that fix the problem instead of hiding it. Talking to someone you trust, taking a timeout, getting fresh air, moving your body, listening to music, deep breathing, these things lower your stress for real. They don't rely on chemicals, they don't create withdrawal, and they don't trap you in a cycle.

Nicotine gives you a quick escape, but real coping gives you control. And control is way more powerful than any vape cloud.



Myths Vs Facts



MYTH 1: “I only smoke sometimes. I won’t get addicted.”

FACT: Addiction doesn’t wait. Teen brains absorb nicotine faster and get hooked quicker because your reward pathways are still developing. Even “once in a while” can turn into cravings without you noticing.

MYTH 2: “Vaping is safer than smoking.”

FACT: Vapes still deliver nicotine, toxic chemicals, and ultrafine particles that damage your lungs. Many cartridges contain higher nicotine levels than cigarettes. Some even include heavy metals and unknown additives.

MYTH 3: “It helps with stress.”

FACT: Nicotine creates the stress it claims to fix. It spikes anxiety, increases irritability, and causes withdrawal symptoms that feel like stress. When you quit, your real stress levels actually drop.

MYTH 4: “Everybody my age is doing it.”

FACT: Most teens in Guyana and across the Caribbean do not smoke or vape. Tobacco companies make it look popular to lure young people in. Being smoke-free is the real majority.

MYTH 5: “I can stop anytime I want.”

FACT: Nicotine rewires your brain to crave it. That doesn’t mean you can’t quit. It means quitting takes strategy, support, and understanding how addiction works. Strength isn’t about starting; it’s about taking back control.

MYTH 6: “Light” or “flavoured” products are safer.”

FACT: They’re not. Flavours only hide the harshness. “Light” and “mild” cigarettes were exposed as marketing tricks. They deliver the same toxins and addiction risks as regular cigarettes.

MYTH 7: “It’s my life. My smoking doesn’t affect anyone else.”

FACT: Second-hand smoke harms friends, siblings, babies, elderly relatives, and even pets. Your choices shape the environment around you more than you think.

MYTH 8: “It’s just for fun.”

FACT: Nicotine is a drug. It alters mood, memory, impulse control, and concentration. You’re not just “having fun”, you’re training your brain to need a chemical to feel normal.

MYTH 9: “Quitting is too hard.”

FACT: Hard doesn’t mean impossible. Millions of teens have quit successfully. Every craving you beat rewires your brain back to normal. Asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

MYTH 10: “I can quit anytime.”

FACT: Most people try 8–11 times before quitting successfully.



The industry tried to play you



Tobacco companies didn't get rich by accident. They engineered their whole business around getting young people hooked before they even knew what addiction was. For years, scientists inside these companies redesigned cigarettes so nicotine hit the brain faster. That wasn't luck, that was chemistry. They made the particles smaller so they could slide deeper into your lungs, hit your bloodstream quicker, and hook you harder. Internal documents released in court show they literally studied teen brains to figure out how to create lifelong customers. And yeah... those customers were teenagers.

Then came the flavours, the bright packaging, the ads that looked fun, rebellious, or freeing. Menthol, candy flavours, mint, mango, all created to make the first hit smoother, so you don't cough, and to make nicotine feel harmless. Companies pretended these flavours were "choices" for adults, but their own marketing plans targeted youth because they knew adults

don't switch brands, teens do. They studied what you like, how you talk, what trends catch your eye, and built their marketing around it. You were never the audience by accident. You were the strategy.

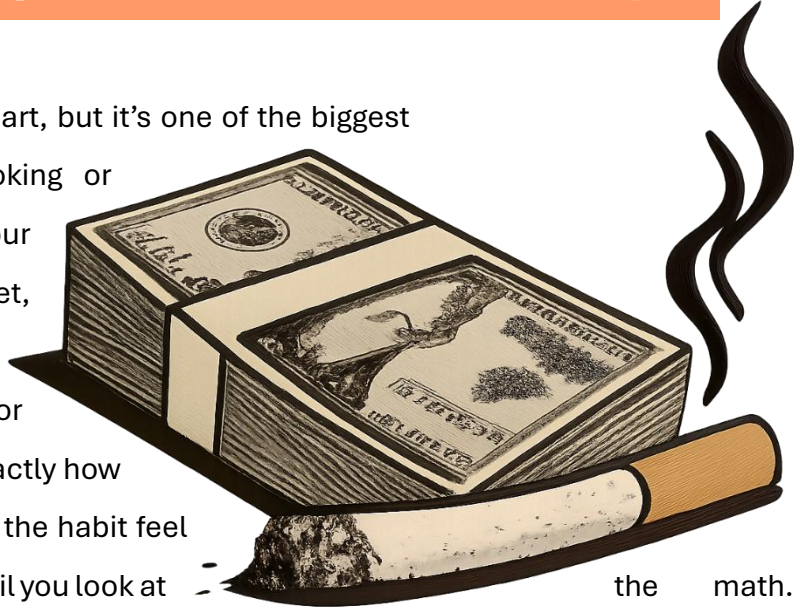
For decades, these companies hid research proving nicotine was addictive, cancer-causing, and damaging to young brains. They denied it publicly while privately admitting their products were harmful. They even created "light" and "mild" cigarettes to convince people they were safer, even though they knew those



labels were a lie. People inhaled deeper, thinking they were choosing a healthier option, but the risks were the same or worse. It was a marketing trick, not a health improvement.

Money drain (the part no one talks about)

Nobody talks about the money part, but it's one of the biggest ways nicotine plays you. Smoking or vaping doesn't just mess with your lungs. It quietly drains your wallet, one puff at a time. A lot of teens think, "It's just a pack a week," or "It's only one vape," but that's exactly how the cycle works. Nicotine makes the habit feel small, harmless, and cheap... until you look at



the math. One pack a week turns into four packs a month, which turns into a whole chunk of money you didn't even realise you lost. And vaping? Those pods and disposables add up even faster because you burn through them without noticing.

Let's be honest. A pack a week easily adds up to thousands a year, which is money you could've spent on things that improve your life. That could be new trainers, unlimited data, AirPods, a weekend getaway, a gym membership, or building your savings instead of wasting it, literally. Most teenagers don't notice because the spending happens in tiny amounts, like small leaks in a bucket. But small leaks still empty the bucket fast.

And that's just the start. The long-term financial damage is even worse. Over time, nicotine damages your bank balance just as it harms your brain; it takes and never gives back. If smoking causes breathing issues, dental problems, chest pains, or emergency room visits, those bills aren't small. Medications, tests, doctor appointments, inhalers, missed work, those costs pile up quickly. People end up paying with their health and their money. So, when you take a step back, this seemingly cheap habit becomes one of the costliest things you can pick up as a teen.

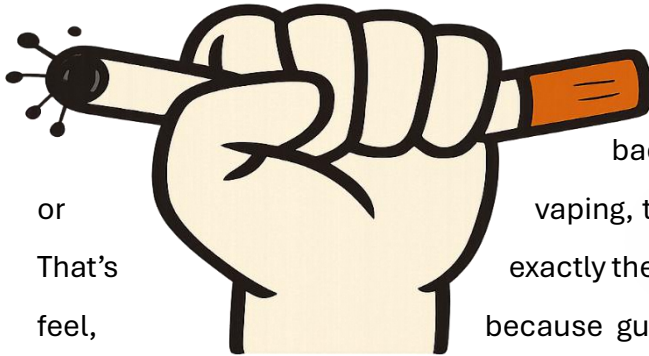
The tobacco industry knows this well. They profit while you lose. You're spending money to stay addicted to something designed to keep you spending.

The Real Cost of Smoking (In Guyana Dollars)



Smoking doesn't just damage your lungs, it quietly drains your money every single day. One pack might not feel like a big deal in the moment, but when you add it up, the numbers get wild fast. If a pack of cigarettes costs about \$600 GYD, in a year you can end up spending almost \$201,600 GYD, literally up in smoke. That's money that could've gone toward clothes, a phone, school supplies, sports, music, travel, or helping out at home. Instead, it's spent on something that damages your health and gives nothing back. The tobacco industry counts on young people not doing the math. But once you see the numbers, the truth is clear: smoking isn't cheap, it isn't smart, and it definitely isn't worth it.

Quitting isn't Weak



or

That's

feel,

back. A lot of teens think once they start smoking or vaping, they're "ruined" or stuck with the habit forever. That's exactly the kind of guilt the tobacco industry wants you to feel, because guilt keeps you quiet and addiction keeps you buying. But the truth is simple: your brain can heal, your body can recover, and millions of teens have quit even after thinking they never could. You're not the first, you're not the worst, and you're not alone. Nicotine is designed to hook people quickly, especially teen brains that are still building willpower, memory, and emotional control. So, if you're addicted, that doesn't mean you're weak. It means the product worked the way it was engineered. Quitting is the actual act of strength.

One of the best first steps is telling a trusted person, such as a parent, teacher, counsellor, coach, sibling, or close friend. Not to get judged or lectured, but because sharing your goal makes the burden lighter and the habit less powerful. Science shows support boosts your chances of quitting and staying smoke-free by keeping you motivated and responsible.

Avoid smoking triggers like certain places, people, music, stress, or boredom. These can activate nicotine cravings by lighting up the pathways in your brain. Recognising triggers makes them less strong. Also, remove cigarettes or vapes from your space. Keeping them just in case is like holding a cake on your bedside table while dieting. If it's there, you'll want it. If it's gone, cravings drop faster.

Tracking cravings shows they aren't constant. They usually spike, peak, and fade in about 5 to 10 minutes. Staying busy during that time helps your brain reset. Walk around, drink water, shower, scroll social media, text a friend, play a game, chew gum, or do push-ups. Distract yourself long enough to ride out the craving. Each time you do, the next one gets weaker. That's brain science, not willpower.

OUTSMART CRAVINGS!

Cravings don't last long—they're brain spikes you can beat. Here's how!

- 1 TRACK CRAVINGS**
Most cravings peak and fade in 5 to 10 minutes.
5-10 MINS
- 2 DISTRACT YOUR BRAIN**
Walk around, Drink water, Shower, Scroll social media, Text a friend, Chew gum, Do push-ups
- 3 RIDE IT OUT!**
Distract yourself long enough to beat the craving.
Scroll social media, Text a game

RIDE IT OUT!
Distract yourself long enough to beat the craving. Each time you do, they get weaker.

That's brain science, not willpower!



How To Stay Tobacco-Free

Staying tobacco-free isn't about being perfect or acting better than anyone else. It's about protecting your peace, your goals, and the version of yourself you're trying to build. A lot of pressure comes from silly moments, friends who push you because they want someone to fall with them, or those "just try it once" situations that hit you when you're tired, stressed, or trying to fit in. Nicotine addiction usually starts with one choice you didn't think mattered. And once it hooks your brain, it's much harder to reverse. Learning to stay away from those pressure points isn't a weakness. It's self-respect. It's knowing your worth before someone else decides it for you.



Real friends don't need you to smoke or vape to feel comfortable around you. If someone only shows up when there's smoke involved, that's not friendship. It's using you for the company in a bad way. The people you choose to stay around shape your future more than you think. If your circle is full of people who take risks without thinking or who clown you for taking care of yourself, the problem isn't you. It's the environment. Distance doesn't make you rude. It makes you smart.

Choosing sports, music, gaming, art, gym, or other activities isn't just about staying busy. It's about feeding the part of your brain that nicotine tries to hijack. Sports pump your body with natural dopamine and energy. Music boosts creativity and emotional balance. Gaming increases focus and teamwork. Art gives you a space to express everything you can't say out loud. The gym builds strength, discipline, and confidence, all things nicotine destroys. These activities don't just distract you from cravings. They create a version of you that doesn't need a substance to feel alive, relaxed, or included

Closing Message

Your future isn't something that magically appears when you turn 18, finish school, or get your first job. It's being built right now, with every choice you make, every habit you pick up, and every decision you walk away from. Tobacco companies want you to believe you've got unlimited time to fix things later, but that's the trick. Nicotine doesn't wait until you're older to start taking from you. It starts from the very first inhale, slowly cutting into your health, your money, your confidence, and the future you're trying to build. CANU/ GUYDIN's message is simple. You deserve better than a product designed to steal pieces of your life before you even get a chance to really live it.

You deserve lungs that don't burn after walking up a flight of stairs. You deserve a brain that can focus clearly during exams instead of fighting cravings. You deserve skin that stays fresh and glowing, not drained and dull from nicotine, which reduces oxygen in your blood. You deserve mornings where you wake up feeling energised, not coughing or reaching for something you don't even want anymore. And most of all, you deserve a life that you control, not a chemical that tricks your brain into needing it to feel normal. Addiction is not a lifestyle. It's a trap. And CANU/ GUYDIN is committed to making sure young people in Guyana see the truth before they get caught in it.

Choosing yourself. Choosing your goals, your health, your energy, your dreams, your future. Real strength isn't in following a crowd; it's in stepping out of a trap designed to look cool. Every time you say no to tobacco, you're saying yes to the person you want to become. Yes, to opportunities. Yes, to freedom. Yes, to a future where you decide what happens next. And the Customs Anti Narcotic Unit and the Guyana Drug Information Network are here to back you every step of the way. Your life is bigger, brighter, and more powerful than any smoke.

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