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Learn How to Clean Lungs After Quitting Smoking



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How Long Does it Take Lungs to Heal After Quitting Smoking?

Time is the biggest factor when it comes to lung repair after quitting smoking. Just 12 hours after your last cigarette the carbon monoxide levels in your blood return to normal. This helps get your body the oxygen it needs for all cellular function.

A critical aspect of lung health is healthy cilia. Cilia are tiny hair-like organelles that are found all throughout your body. Cilia in the lungs sweep out debris, mucus, and other pollutants.

Lung improvement begins after 2 weeks to 3 months, the cilia in your lungs take 1 to 9 months to repair.

Healing your lungs after quitting smoking is going to take time. There is no magic pill to make chest discomfort after quitting smoking disappear, but there are some tips and tricks to give your lungs the best shot at a speedy recovery.

Clean Lungs After Quitting Smoking: **Diet**

Foods to Avoid:

The foods below are mucus producing and can increase the mucus in the lungs making it harder to clean them after quitting smoking.

Dairy products This includes cheese, butter, cream, yogurt, kefir, and milk (all milk including skim, 1%, 2%, whole, and raw organic).

Processed foods. Avoid any meats that have been modified to extend shelf life or augment taste such as jerky, bacon, ham, salami, sausage, hot dogs, canned meat and others.

Fast food meals are highly processed and should be avoided. Processed vegan/vegetarian foods and food substitutes (mock-meats and cheese substitutes) are also heavy mucus producers.

Packaged convenience foods, including frozen convenience foods can be left on the shelf.

Candies and sweets. Avoid candy bars, pies, cakes, pastries, taffy, gelatin, and other sugary confectionery. Such sweets can be comfort foods for some people, but if your lungs hurt after quitting smoking these types of foods aren't going to help you feel better.

Caffeine. Avoid coffee and highly caffeinated teas or sodas. Drink lots of water instead. Green tea is caffeinated, but also is very antioxidant rich, and thus might be beneficial for lung pain after quitting smoking. Antioxidants can help clear toxins from throughout the body including the lungs.

Mild mucus producers include some surprises such as corn and soy products, fatty oils, nuts, seeds, beans, grains (e.g. breads, barley, oats, quinoa, spelt, and rice), plus starchy and fatty vegetables (e.g. avocado, mushrooms, green peas, olives, plantains, potatoes, and squashes).

Many of the foods in this category are healthy and have other nutritious attributes. Avoiding all mild mucus producers isn't likely to be a game changer for lung pain after quitting smoking.

Foods to Consume

Pineapple. contains a compound called bromelain, which helps reduce inflammation. Bromelain also helps you increase lung elasticity so that you can take in more oxygen with deeper breaths.

Honey. Some anecdotal evidence suggests a teaspoon of honey taken daily can provide many health benefits including removing pollutants from the lungs. Even if it isn't as effective as some people claim, a spoonful of delicious honey isn't a bad way to start your day!

Citrus fruits and berries (lemons, limes, oranges, grapefruits, kumquats, blueberries, blackberries, etc.).

Leafy greens and herbs (brussel sprouts, celery, asparagus, bamboo shoots, cauliflower, broccoli, thyme, rosemary, oregano, etc.).

Radishes (including red, daikon, horseradish, and others) have many health benefits and they are particularly good for mitigating lung discomfort after quitting smoking. They eliminate excess mucus, soothe sore throats, clear sinuses, and decrease congestion in the respiratory system.

Spicy roots including garlic, onions, ginger, and turmeric are excellent for the lungs. Foods with **high chlorophyll** (including juiced wheatgrass, spirulina, and sprouted seeds) help oxygenate the body.

How to Clean Lungs After Quitting Smoking: Avoid Pollutants

Cleaning your lungs after quitting smoking will go easier if other pollutants aren't getting into your respiratory system.

Avoid other smokers.

Not only will second-hand smoke irritate your lungs, other smokers are likely to induce cravings and possibly cause you to relapse. Smoke from other sources, such as fires or wood burning stoves, should be avoided as well.

Keep your living spaces ventilated and clean.

An in-home air purifier can remove allergens and particulate matter helping your lungs to access clean air.

Certain plants help accomplish this goal, consider purchasing a house plant such as a spider plant, rubber tree, or a peace lily.

Try sleeping with windows open to let in some outside air. Keeping clean and fresh air in the household is also helped by keeping up with dusting and vacuuming.

Although a clean house helps the lungs get clean air, many household cleaning products contain harmful chemicals and should be used with caution. Ammonia in particular is highly irritable to the respiratory system.

How to Clean Lungs After Quitting Smoking: Breathing Exercises

Diaphragmatic breathing exercises are recommended by pulmonary rehabilitation specialists to help lungs function properly.

If you don't have a chronic lung disease, but your lungs hurt after quitting smoking, these exercises will help cleanse your lungs and get them back to full health.

Pursed lip breathing is done by slowly inhaling through the nose for approximately 2 seconds. and exhaling through the mouth for approximately 4 seconds, making sure to purse your lips constricting airflow.

Breathe out steadily and slowly. The extra time spent on the exhale compared to the inhale is important.

Be sure to relax your head, neck and shoulders throughout the exercise. The benefits of pursed lip breathing exercises include:

- Opening air passages for easier breathing.
- Moving old and stale air out of the lungs.
- Promoting relaxation.
- Relieving shortness of breath.

Diaphragmatic breathing (also called belly breathing) is another breathing exercise that helps increase pulmonary function.

Doing this exercise can help clean your lungs after quitting smoking. Diaphragmatic breathing is similar to pursed lip breathing, but it adds an element of diaphragm exercise.

To practice diaphragmatic breathing place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest. As you inhale allow the hand on your belly to rise up while the hand on your chest remains in place.

During the exhale, breathe out slowly through pursed lips. Use the hand that is on your belly to help push air out. Repeat the exercise 3 to 10 times.

Benefits of diaphragmatic breathing include:

- Strengthening and lengthening of respiratory muscles.
- Increasing cardiorespiratory fitness.

How to Clean Lungs After Quitting Smoking: Physical Exercise

Physical fitness is a critical aspect of a healthy body, including the lungs.

The benefits of physical exercise are numerous and range from weight control, reducing risk of cardiovascular disease, improving mental health and mood, and reducing risk of some cancers.

Furthermore, exercising releases endorphins and dopamine, which helps with nicotine withdrawal.

Yoga includes a large component of breath exercises and whole body exercises. Both are good for healthy lung function and improving your lungs after quitting smoking. Consider adding a yoga routine to your day.

If you aren't accustomed to physical exercise, then slowly add it to your routine.

Gradually ramp up your physical activity as the weeks turn into months. As you exercise, you may notice coughing will occur as a response.

By exercising, the phlegm and mucus in your respiratory system becomes dislodged and you cough to expel it from your system.

The coughing may be uncomfortable, but getting rid of all the gunk will help heal your lungs after quitting smoking. Hit two birds with one stone and get outside to exercise in some fresh outdoor air.

Do Your Lungs Get Better After Quitting Smoking?

While diet, breathing exercises and physical exercise can all help repair lung damage and promote lung health, the bottom line is smoking (especially long-term) causes severe damage to the lungs, that may be irreversible.

That said, continuing to smoke will only make this damage worse and lead to an increased likelihood of COPD and lung cancer.

The sooner you quit smoking, the better your chances of lung repair are.

There are a lot of products out there claiming to clean lungs after quitting smoking but there is no scientific evidence that any of these products work.

[According to Dr Joshua Englert](#) “There are countless products for sale on the internet that claim to remove toxins from the lungs, but there is no scientific research to support the use of any of them.”

While there typically isn't any harm in trying these methods it's important to realize there are no quick fixes to smoke induced lung damage.

The lungs are good at cleaning themselves and over time as you refrain from smoking, second-hand smoke, and any other lung pollutants such as vaping or poor air quality, they will begin to heal themselves.

Can Lungs Get Better After 40 Years of Smoking?

If you have been smoking for decades it will take your lungs decades to repair themselves, and they will likely never return to normal. That said, stopping smoking after 40 years is better than continuing to smoke for 45 or 50 years.

It's never too late to quit and while your lungs may never heal completely, they will begin to get better once you stop smoking, even if you've been smoking your whole life.

Can You Get Tar Removed From Your Lungs?

If you've been smoking for a long time, you have tar in your lungs. Tar refers to the toxic particles left behind in the lungs. Tar lines the lungs and colors them black. It damages the cilia in the lungs and airway that are responsible for cleaning the lungs.

Tar also contains toxins such as carbon monoxide, ammonia and hydrogen cyanide.

There is no procedure or medication that instantly removes tar from your lungs. This process takes time. After quitting smoking, the cilia will begin to repair themselves, and slowly but surely get to work removing the tar from your lungs. Cilia can take anywhere from 1 to 9 months to heal after you quit smoking.

Research shows that for every 6 years you smoked, it takes 1 year to remove that amount of tar from your respiratory system.

Protect Your Lungs

If you've quit smoking and are working on healing your lungs, be patient with the process, avoid pollutants, avoid situations that may trigger cravings and generally maintain a healthy lifestyle.

You should not inhale anything other than pure clean air, and work to keep yourself healthy. Illnesses like [bronchitis](#) and even head colds can result in increased mucus production which will be harder on your lungs.

By staying healthy you give your body the best chance at recovery.

When to contact a doctor

Contact a doctor right away if you are having chest pain after quitting smoking that radiates into the left arm, neck and jaw; tightness, squeezing, or heaviness in the chest; shortness of breath, sweating, and nausea.

If you are struggling to quit smoking a doctor can help.

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