



How does smoking affect my liver?

The liver, one of the body's largest organs, processes the food we eat so the body can use it for energy, and acts as a filter for toxic substances that get in our body.

When you have hepatitis C, over time the virus causes your liver to become inflamed (swollen) and not work as well to clear out toxic substances. If you have hepatitis C and you smoke, your liver has to work even harder to clear the cancer-causing substances found in tobacco.

What kind of problems can smoking cause with my hepatitis C?

If you have hepatitis C and smoke, you:

- Increase your chance of getting liver cancer. This is in addition to the fact that having hepatitis C alone greatly increases your risk for this type of cancer.
- Speed up the development of fibrosis, which is when scar tissue starts to form on the liver. Fibrosis can turn into cirrhosis, which happens when the scar tissue takes over the liver.
- Increase your risk of joint pain, most likely in the fingers, back, and knees

These problems are in addition to tobacco-specific ones such as increased risk for certain cancers, COPD, and problems with your heart including stroke.

How will quitting smoking affect my hepatitis C?

Specific to your hepatitis C, quitting smoking may reduce your risk of developing liver cancer and joint pain and slow down the development of fibrosis.

In addition, quitting will reduce your risk of tobacco-related cancers, COPD, and heart disease.

I want to quit using tobacco — how do I get started?

- Call VA's tobacco quitline at **1-855-QUIT-VET** (1-855-784-8838) Monday–Friday, available in English & Spanish
- Sign up for VA's SmokefreeVET text messaging program—text the word **VET** to **47848** (or **VETesp** to **47848** for Spanish) or visit smokefree.gov/VET
- Talk to your VA primary care provider or hepatitis care team about tobacco cessation medications and counseling that can help you quit
- Visit publichealth.va.gov/smoking