

## NICE GUIDANCE PH48 TOOLKIT

### DOCUMENT 11: CARBON MONOXIDE MONITORING CRIB SHEET

Discussing carbon monoxide with patients who smoke can be a really positive way of helping them see how quickly they can start to benefit from giving up. You can use the carbon monoxide monitor to clearly demonstrate this, and patients generally enjoy seeing how quickly this happens, giving a real sense of achievement as they quickly see their levels return to that of a non-smoker.

Below are some frequently asked questions and, some easy answers to help patients understand.

#### WHAT IS IT?

Carbon monoxide is a colourless, odourless gas sometimes known as “the silent killer.” It’s normally associated with leaky boilers and car exhaust fumes which, most of us know, can be deadly. What a lot of people don’t realise though, is that it is one of the main components of tobacco smoke and, is only one of the deadly chemicals of which there are more than 7,000!<sup>1</sup>

#### WHAT DOES IT DO?

It thickens the blood which pushes up blood pressure, making the heart work harder. It takes up to 15% of the space in red blood cells which should be carrying oxygen. No wonder smokers often struggle with energy levels!

#### HOW DO I KNOW HOW IT’S AFFECTING ME?

We can use a monitor to show you what your carbon monoxide levels are and tell you about what they should be. It’s simple and only takes a couple of minutes to do.

#### IF I’VE BEEN SMOKING FOR A LONG TIME, THERE’S NOT MUCH POINT IN ME STOPPING IS THERE?

Lots of people think that’s the case but the really good news is that isn’t true at all. In fact, carbon monoxide will be gone from your body within 24-48 hours of being Smokefree. People often find that they very quickly have more energy and feel less breathless. We can check your carbon monoxide levels again after a couple of days of not smoking to show you the difference.

Because you have more oxygen you might feel a bit lightheaded at first, this is because your brains, as well as all your other organs, is getting more oxygen. That must be a good thing, and the lightheaded feeling will pass after a day or two.

The extra oxygen is also one of the reasons why that when people give up, they can feel a bit restless and irritable. If you can start to be a bit more active to use up your extra energy, that will benefit you in so many ways, not just by distracting you from smoking!

A craving will last for under a minute if you can distract yourself, so try and plan what you’ll do.

1. <https://ash.org.uk/information-and-resources/fact-sheets/statistical/facts-at-a-glance/>

