Smoking and asthma
Asthma is a condition affecting the small tubes that carry air in and out of the lungs (airways).

When someone with asthma comes into contact with something that irritates their airways (trigger), the muscles around the walls of the airways tighten, the airways become narrower and the lining of the airways becomes inflamed, starting to swell. Sometimes, sticky mucus or phlegm builds up, further narrowing the airways.

These reactions cause the airways to become narrower and irritated – making it difficult to breath and leading to symptoms of asthma.

Tobacco smoke is a major trigger of asthma.

Smoking does not cause asthma but does make it worse, although there is evidence that smoking during pregnancy significantly increases the risk of the child developing asthma.

Smokers with asthma are more likely to experience higher rates of hospitalisation than people with asthma who do not smoke.

Smokers with asthma are more likely to require higher doses of preventer medicine, as smoking prevents medication from doing its job properly.
Quitting smoking has been shown to improve the lung function in people with asthma. The benefits from stopping smoking can produce rapid benefits. The damage caused to the lungs by smoking will be halted. Other immediate health benefits include:

- After two days: lungs begin to clear and sense of taste and smell start returning
- After three days: energy levels increase and breathing becomes easier
- Between two and 12 weeks: blood circulation gets better and exercise gets easier
- Within three to nine months: coughing, wheezing and shortness of breath improve, with less frequent asthma attacks

You may notice that you get more coughs after you have stopped – this is normal and does not last long. Within a month you can expect to notice benefits.

Stopping smoking can be difficult because of the way in which nicotine acts on the brain, but it is one of the most important things that you can do to improve your asthma.

If you try to stop without support your chances are about one in 20. However you are four times more likely to quit successfully with support.
CAMQUIT is a FREE service providing advice, information and support to people who want to stop smoking.

Specialist advisors are based within all GP practices, many pharmacies, community-based CAMQUIT clinics and through the CAMQUIT telephone service.

One-to-one appointments with an advisor are available during the daytime and evening and appointments are for an average of 20 minutes.

What do stop smoking advisors do?
• Offer specialist advice, support and encouragement to help people stop smoking for good
• They listen and are non-judgemental
• Support smokers to access medication which will improve their chances of success, such as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT), Zyban and Varenicline via NHS prescription

Your best chance of success is by getting support. You can do this by contacting your local GP or pharmacy or by calling CAMQUIT on:

0800 018 4304

www.camquit.nhs.uk

Useful links
Asthma UK – www.asthma.org.uk
British Lung Foundation – www.blf.org.uk
Smokefree NHS – www.nhs.uk/smokefree