



Education

Smoking: Ways to Quit

Know why you want to quit.

When you quit smoking, your body gets to work repairing damaged tissues. Here are some of the health benefits:

- You stop the destruction of your lungs.
- Your lungs are better able to fight colds, and other respiratory infections.
- You decrease your risk of cancer, heart disease, strokes, and circulation problems.

In addition, when you quit you will:

- Feel more in control of your life.
- Have better smelling hair, breath, clothes, home, and car.
- Have more stamina for activities.
- Save money.
- Protect your family and friends from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Smoking is an addictive habit. Most former smokers make several attempts to quit before they finally succeed. So, never say, "I can't." Just keep trying.

Set a quit date.

Set a date for when you will stop smoking. Don't buy cigarettes to carry you beyond your last day. Tell your family and friends you plan to quit, and ask for their support and encouragement. Ask them not to offer you cigarettes.

Make a plan.

5 Days Before Your Quit Date

- Think about your reasons for quitting.
- Tell your friends and family you are planning to quit.
- Stop buying cigarettes.

4 Days Before Your Quit Date

- Pay attention to when and why you smoke.
- Think of other things to hold in your hand instead of a cigarette.
- Think of habits or routines to change.

3 Days Before Your Quit Date

- Plan what you will do with the extra money when you stop buying cigarettes.
- Think of whom you can reach out to when you need help.

2 Days Before Your Quit Date

- Consider buying nonprescription nicotine patches or nicotine gum. Or see your health care provider to get a prescription for the nicotine inhaler, nasal spray, or other medicine that can help.

1 Day Before Your Quit Date

- Put away lighters and ashtrays.
- Throw away all cigarettes and matches - no emergency stashes are allowed!
- Clean your clothes to get rid of the smell of cigarette smoke.

Quit Day

- Keep very busy.
- Remind family and friends that this is your quit day.
- Stay away from alcohol.
- Stay away from places where you used to smoke and people you used to smoke with.
- Give yourself a treat or do something else special.

Commit to staying quit.

Make sure that all your cigarettes and ashtrays are thrown away.

If you keep cigarettes or ashtrays around, sooner or later you'll break down and smoke one, then another, then another, and so on. Throw them away. Make it hard to start again.

Because you are used to having something in your mouth, you may want to chew gum as a substitute for smoking. Or munch on carrots or celery.

Spend time with nonsmokers rather than with smokers.

Think of yourself as a nonsmoker. Tell other people that you are a nonsmoker (for example, in restaurants). Stay away from places where there are a lot of smokers, such as bars. Avoid spending time with smokers. You can't tell others not to smoke, but you don't have to sit with them while they do. Plan on walking away from cigarette smoke. Spend time with nonsmokers and sit in the nonsmoking section of restaurants.

Be prepared for relapse or difficult situations.

Most people who go back to smoking cigarettes do so within the first 3 months after quitting. Many people try 5 or more times before they successfully quit. Avoid drinking alcohol, because it lowers your chances of success. Don't be distracted by the weight you may gain after quitting. Smokers usually do not gain more than 10 pounds when they stop smoking. Learn new ways to improve your mood and overcome depression.

Start an exercise program.

As you become more fit, you will not want the nicotine effects in your body. Regular exercise will also help keep you from gaining weight.

Keep your hands busy.

You may not know what to do with your hands for a while. Try reading, knitting, needlework, pottery, drawing, making a plastic model, or doing a jigsaw puzzle. Join special interest groups that keep you involved in your hobby.

Take on new activities.

Change your routine. Take on new activities that don't include smoking. Join an exercise group and work out regularly. Sign up for an evening class or a join a study group at your place of worship. Go on more outings with your family or friends. Learn ways to relax and manage stress.

Join a quit-smoking program if it helps.

Some people do better in groups, or with a set of instructions to follow. That's fine, too. Remember, the goal is to quit smoking. It doesn't matter how you do it.

Consider using nicotine replacement therapy.

Nicotine is the drug that is in tobacco. You can use nicotine patches or gum, available without a prescription at your local pharmacy, to help you quit smoking. Quitting smoking is a two-step process. It includes breaking the physical addiction to nicotine and breaking the smoking habit. Nicotine replacement helps take care of the nicotine addiction so that you can focus on breaking the habit.

Your health care provider can prescribe nicotine substitutes that can almost double your chances of quitting for good. They are:

- Zyban (bupropion HCL)
- nicotine inhaler
- nicotine lozenge
- nicotine nasal spray
- nicotine patch.

None of these treatments is a miracle cure. Quitting can be hard work, but you can learn to live without cigarettes in your daily life.

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