

Smoking: How to Quit

Know why you want to quit.

To successfully quit smoking, it helps to have reasons for quitting that are stronger than the urges to smoke. There are many positive benefits to being a nonsmoker, so think about what motivates you. For example, when you quit you may:

- Feel more in control of your life
- Have better smelling hair, breath, clothes, home, and car
- Help prevent the premature wrinkles smoking causes on your face
- Have more stamina for activities
- Save money

Here are some of the health benefits:

- You stop damage to your lungs.
- You improve the blood flow to your heart, brain, and other body organs.
- You can fight colds and other respiratory infections more easily.
- You lower your risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, and circulation problems.
- You will protect your family and friends from the dangers of your secondhand smoke.

How can I quit?

There are things you can do to help yourself quit smoking:

- Set a quit date. Set a date when you will stop smoking. Don't buy cigarettes that will carry you past your last day.
- Throw away your cigarettes and ashtrays. Don't make it easy to start smoking again. If you keep cigarettes in the house you may smoke one, and then another, and another.
- Get support from family and friends. Ask for their encouragement. Ask them not to offer you cigarettes. Ask them to help by not smoking around you.
- Spend time with people who don't smoke. Think of yourself as a nonsmoker. Don't go to places where there are a lot of smokers, such as parties or bars. Sit in the nonsmoking section of restaurants.
- Do things that don't involve smoking or people who are smokers. You may want to attend a new club or activity.
- Start an exercise program. As you become more fit, you will not want the nicotine effects in your body. Regular exercise will help keep you from gaining weight. Keep yourself busy. You may find you don't know what to do with your hands. You can read or draw, fix things, make a plastic model, or do a puzzle. You may also be used to having something in your mouth. You could chew gum or eat carrots or celery.

- Take on new activities. Learn ways to relax and manage stress, such as exercise or going out with family or friends. Join a group or take a class in areas that interest you, such as art, music, or another hobby. Volunteer in your community.
- Be prepared for relapse and temptation. Most people who go back to smoking cigarettes do so within the first 3 months after they quit. Many people try 5 or more times before they successfully quit. Don't use the excuse that you want to avoid weight gain after you quit. Smokers usually don't gain more than 10 pounds when they stop smoking. Don't drink alcohol because it lowers your chances of success. Join a quit-smoking program. It may be easier for you to quit if you have the support of a group.
- Think about using nicotine gum or patches. Nicotine is the drug in tobacco that makes it hard to quit. The nicotine gum or patches help you cut your craving for nicotine. You can get nicotine gum or patches at your drug store. You do not need a prescription.
- Think about asking your healthcare provider for a prescription medicine.

How will I feel after I quit?

The symptoms of withdrawal from nicotine may be intense, especially during the first 72 hours after your last use of tobacco. When you stop smoking, you may have withdrawal symptoms such as:

- Irritability
- Shakiness
- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble sleeping
- Increased appetite
- Increased craving for nicotine

The effects of nicotine withdrawal are different for each person. The symptoms gradually get better over the next few weeks or months. Hang in there. Most people no longer feel the effects of withdrawal 6 to 8 weeks after quitting. When the withdrawal symptoms go away you will start feeling better.

Smoking is an addictive habit. Most former smokers make several attempts to quit before they finally succeed. So, never say, "I can't." You CAN learn to live without cigarettes in your daily life. You can quit and quit for good. Just keep trying.

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