

Quitting Smoking



It takes time to quit smoking. Your body has come to depend on nicotine, an addictive chemical, while smoking itself has become a part of your daily routine, a habit. However, you CAN quit for good and being prepared can help.

START TO STOP SMOKING

START: 5 important steps toward quitting for good

- S**et a quit date
- T**ell family, friends, and coworkers you plan to quit
- A**nticipate and plan for the challenges you will face while quitting
- R**emove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car, and workplace
- T**alk with your doctor about getting help to quit

Source: National Cancer Institute.

TELL FAMILY & FRIENDS

It's easier to quit smoking when you have support. Don't be afraid to tell people about your plans to quit. Let them know how they can help, as well as if and when they should check on your progress. Challenge any friends who are also smokers to quit along with you or request that they not smoke when you're around.



You can also join an online or in-person support group, or call the National Cancer Institute's Smoking Quitline at 1-877-44U-Quit (1-877-448-7848) or the National Quitline at 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669).



SET A QUIT DATE






You may want to pick a day that is important to you, such as a birthday or anniversary, but *any* day can be your quit day. Give yourself enough time between today and your quit day to prepare and plan. When you're ready, take the first step and START to stop smoking.

ANTICIPATE AND PLAN FOR CHALLENGES

Short-term challenges

In the first few weeks after quitting, you may experience some physical and emotional discomfort. This is called withdrawal. Your brain and body are used to running on nicotine, and now they need to re-learn how to function without it.

Common withdrawal symptoms include:

-  Feeling depressed or anxious
-  Brain fog
-  Difficulty sleeping
-  Fatigue (tiredness)
-  Hunger or weight gain

Remind yourself that your worst withdrawal symptoms could be over in as little as 2 weeks.

Long-term challenges

Some long-term challenges, however, will remain after the physical withdrawal phase. You may find you still crave a cigarette after a bad day or when someone around you is smoking. Remind yourself that you are no longer physically addicted to nicotine at this point, and you are mentally strong enough to resist the urge to smoke.



Understand and plan

Planning ahead for these challenges can help you handle them in the moment. The first step is to look at your current smoking habits. You may want to keep a journal or make a list to figure out what times of day or types of situations make you crave cigarettes the most. Being aware of what causes your cravings will help you gain control of them.



Quitting Smoking

REMOVE CIGARETTES AND TOBACCO FROM YOUR ENVIRONMENT

The next step is to remove *everything* that reminds you of smoking—not just cigarettes. That means lighters, matches, and ashtrays. And remember to search in places where you may have stored items, such as drawers, bags, and coats. **Saving even a single cigarette will make it more difficult to quit.**

Cigarette smoke can linger in your house, car, and on your clothes, acting as a reminder of smoking. Clean as much as you can before you quit.



TALK WITH YOUR DOCTOR

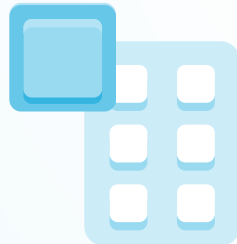
For most smokers, quitting “cold turkey” or all at once without any support doesn’t work. A better idea is to ask your doctor what medications, programs, or resources are available to help you quit.

MEDICINE

Using medicine to help you quit can increase your chance of success by helping reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. All medicines have benefits and risks. Talk with your doctor about which medicine may be right for you.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

NRT comes in many forms, but they all use a small amount of nicotine to help lower your urge to smoke. Some (nasal spray and inhaler) need a prescription. You can buy others (patches, gum, and lozenges) over-the-counter at most pharmacies.



Nicotine-free medicines

Some medicines do not contain nicotine but can still help lower your urge to smoke. You can get these only with a doctor’s prescription.

COUNSELING

Counseling can help you learn about and deal with the mental, physical, and social elements of smoking. The types of counseling you can choose from include:



One-on-one counseling



Group meetings



Web-, phone-, or text-based programs



For your medicine to work best, always take it as directed by your doctor.



Using medicine and counseling together can more than double your chances of quitting.

Quitting Smoking

STAYING ON TRACK

Now that you're prepared to quit, here are some final tips to get you through your first smoke-free days.

KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS AND AVOID THEM

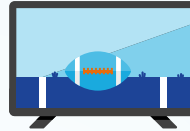
Certain places, situations, or feelings may increase your urge to smoke. These are known as triggers. When you know what your triggers are, you can take steps to avoid them. Some examples of triggers are:



Drinking coffee or alcoholic beverages



Being around others who smoke



Watching TV or surfing the internet



Feeling stressed, lonely, or bored

If you do get the urge to smoke, wait it out or distract yourself. Usually the urge only lasts a few minutes.

CREATE HEALTHY DISTRACTIONS

Distract your body

Physical activity can distract you from smoking. It may also help lower your urge to smoke.

You can try:



Taking a walk or starting an exercise routine



Holding or squeezing something to distract your hands



Distracting your mouth with sugar-free gum, toothpicks, or a lollipop



Eating crunchy snacks such as pretzels or cut-up vegetables can also help keep your mouth and hands busy

Distract your mind

Changing your daily routine can help you avoid triggers and create healthier habits.

You can try:



Deep breathing or meditating



Listening to music or reading



Starting a new hobby



Texting or calling a friend to chat

REACHING THE FINISH LINE

Quitting is hard work. Reward yourself for your efforts. Come up with a list of things that you would enjoy getting as a reward, such as taking a trip or having a nice dinner. Set aside the money you once spent on cigarettes and use it to buy some of your rewards. You'll be surprised how fast it adds up!



If you have a setback, don't be hard on yourself. Learn from it and try again. You CAN live a smoke-free life!

References: 1. National Cancer Institute. Clearing the air: quit smoking today. Reprinted August 2011. Accessed October 8, 2020. <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/clearing-the-air-pdf>
2. National Cancer Institute. Cigarette smoking: health risks and how to quit (PDQ®)-patient version. Updated January 3, 2020. Accessed October 8, 2020. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/quit-smoking-pdq>
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking cessation—the role of healthcare professionals and health systems. Accessed October 8, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2020-smoking-cessation/fact-sheets/pdfs/healthcare-professionals-health-systems-h.pdf

This information does not replace regular medical checkups or your health care provider's advice. Consult your health care provider about what is best for your personal health.