

Smoking: Ways to Quit

It's not too late to quit smoking.

Quitting smoking can greatly improve your health. For example, it reduces your risk of disease and helps your circulation, your stamina, and your skin. Your risk for coronary heart disease, a common cause of death and disability, is halved after only a year without smoking.

Quitting smoking also reduces the likelihood of your getting respiratory problems and lung cancer. Studies have shown that your smoke affects others as well as yourself. Children of parents who smoke around the house are more prone to respiratory infections than children from nonsmoking homes. Smoking is an addictive habit. Most former smokers make several attempts to quit before they are finally successful. 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.

Throw your cigarettes and ashtrays 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 less easy to start again. Try

Chewing gum as a substitute for cigarettes.

Spend time with nonsmokers rather than with smokers.

Think of yourself and identify yourself as a nonsmoker (for example, in restaurants). Stay away from smokers' havens, 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. Old habits die hard and one of your old smoking buddies is sure to offer you a cigarette. 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 weight gain, which is usually less than 10 pounds. 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 when you quit smoking.

Keep your hands busy.

You may not know what to do with your hands for a while. Pick up a book or a magazine. Try 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 quit-smoking programs if it helps.

Some people do better in groups, or with a set of instructions to follow. That's fine, too. Remember, the aim 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 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.

You may prefer to be involved in an organized quit-smoking program while you are using nicotine patches or gum or other medicine to help you quit. 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. @ Published by McKesson Health Solutions LLC.

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