

HOW TO QUIT SMOKING.

Nearly everyone knows that smoking can cause lung cancer, but few people realize it is also a risk factor for cancer of the mouth, voice box (larynx), bladder, kidney, pancreas, cervix, stomach, and some leukemias.

Smokers often say, “Don’t tell me why to quit, tell me how.” There is no one right way to quit, but there are some key elements in quitting smoking successfully. These 4 factors are crucial:

- Making the decision to quit
- Setting a quit date and choosing a quit plan
- Dealing with withdrawal
- Maintenance or staying quit

Making the Decision to Quit

The decision to quit smoking is one that only you can make. Others may want you to quit, but the real commitment must come from you.

Researchers have looked into how and why people stop smoking. They have some ideas, or models, of how this happens.

The Health Belief Model says that you will be more likely to stop smoking if you:

- Believe that you could get a smoking-related disease and this worries you
- Believe that you can make an honest attempt at quitting smoking
- Believe that the benefits of quitting outweigh the benefits of continuing to smoke
- Know of someone who has had health problems as a result of their smoking

Do any of these apply to you?

The Stages of Change Model identifies the stages that a person goes through in making a change in behavior. Here are the stages as they apply to quitting smoking:

- Pre-contemplator - This is the smoker who is not thinking seriously about quitting right now.
- Contemplator - This is the smoker who is actively thinking about quitting but is not quite ready to make a serious attempt yet. This person may

say, “Yes, I’m ready to quit, but the stress at work is too much, or I don’t want to gain weight, or I’m not sure if I can do it.”

- Preparation - Smokers in the preparation stage seriously intend to quit in the next month and often have tried to quit in the past 12 months. They usually have a plan.
- Action - This is the first 6 months when the smoker is actively quitting.
- Maintenance - This is the period of 6 months to 5 years after quitting when the ex-smoker is aware of the danger of relapse and take steps to avoid it.
- Where do you fit in this model - If you are thinking about quitting, setting a date and deciding on a plan will move you into the preparation stage, the best place to start.

Why should you quit? Each smoker has his or her own reasons; here are three good ones:

Your Family. Your family needs your financial and emotional support. If you die prematurely from a smoking-related illness, who will do all the things you do for your family?

Your Kids. Kids exposed to secondhand smoke at home are more prone to colds, ear infections and allergies than children of nonsmoking parents. By age 7, they may be shorter than their friends, lag behind in reading ability and have behavior problems. Worse still, they will likely become smokers themselves.

Yourself. It’s never too late to quit smoking. Right away, you’ll look better (no more yellow teeth and fingers), feel better (good-bye hacking cough, hello vitality) and enjoy life better (flowers smell sweeter, food tastes better).

The Next Move: You know why you want to quit. Now choose a date and put a big red circle on the calendar. Every night before going to bed, state your reasons for quitting out loud 10 times.

The Three Phases of Quitting:

- Deciding To Quit
- Preparing To Quit
- Following Through

For most people the best way to quit will be some combination of medicine, a method to change personal habits, and emotional support. The best-known medicines are probably nicotine substitutes such as the patch, gum, and

nasal spray, which are known as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).

When smokers try to cut back or quit, the absence of nicotine leads to withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal is both physical and psychological. Physically, the body is reacting to the absence of the drug nicotine. Psychologically, the smoker is faced with giving up a habit. Both must be dealt with to succeed at quitting.

Withdrawal symptoms can include any of the following:

- Depression
- Feelings of frustration and anger
- Irritability
- Trouble sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating
- Restlessness
- Headache
- Tiredness
- Increased appetite

These uncomfortable symptoms lead the smoker to again start smoking cigarettes to boost blood levels of nicotine back to a level where there are no symptoms.

One way to overcome these urges or cravings is to identify rationalizations as they come up. A rationalization is a mistaken belief that seems to make sense at the time but is not based on facts. If you have tried to quit before, you will probably recognize many of these common rationalizations.

- I'll just have one to get through this rough spot. (Does a smoker ever stop with just one?)
- Today is not a good day; I'll quit tomorrow. (We've heard that one before.)
- It's my only vice.
- How bad is smoking, really? Uncle Harry smoked all his life and he lived to be over 90. Air pollution is probably just as bad.
- You've got to die of something.
- Life is no fun without smoking.

You probably can add more to the list. As you go through the first few days without smoking, write down any rationalizations as they come up and recognize them for what they are: messages that can trap you into going back to smoking. Use the ideas below to help you keep your commitment to quitting.

Avoid people and places where you are tempted to smoke. Later on you will be able to handle these with more confidence.

Alter habits. Switch to juices or water instead of alcohol or coffee. Take a different route to work; take a brisk walk instead of a coffee break.

Alternatives. Use oral substitutions such as sugarless gum or hard candy, raw vegetables such as carrot sticks, or sunflower seeds.

Activities. Exercise or do hobbies that keep your hands busy (needlework, woodworking, etc.) and can help distract you from the urge to smoke.

Deep breathing. When you were smoking, you breathed deeply as you inhaled the smoke. When the urge strikes now, breathe deeply and picture your lungs filling with fresh, clean air. Remind yourself of your reasons for quitting and the benefits you'll gain as an ex-smoker.

Delay. If you feel that you are about to light up, delay. Tell yourself you must wait at least 10 minutes. Often this simple trick will allow you to move beyond the acute urge to smoke.

What you're doing is not easy, so you deserve a reward. Put the money you would have spent on tobacco in a jar every day and then buy yourself a weekly treat. Buy a magazine, go out to eat, call a friend long-distance. Or save the money for a major purchase. You can also reward yourself in ways that don't cost money: take time out to read, work on a hobby, or take a relaxing bath.

Ways of Quitting:

Switch Brands

- Switch to a brand you find distasteful.
- Change to a brand that is low in tar and nicotine a couple of weeks before your target date. This will help change your smoking behavior. However, do not smoke more cigarettes, inhale them more often or more deeply, or place your fingertips over the holes in the filters. All of these will increase your nicotine intake, and the idea is to get your body use to functioning without nicotine.

Cut Down the Number of Cigarettes You Smoke

- Smoke only half of each cigarette.
- Each day, postpone the lighting of your first cigarette 1 hour.
- Decide you'll only smoke during odd or even hours of the day.
- Decide beforehand how many cigarettes you'll smoke during the day. For each additional cigarette, give a dollar to your favorite charity.
- Change your eating habits to help you cut down. For example, drink milk, which many people consider incompatible with smoking. End meals or snacks with something that won't lead to a cigarette.
- Reach for a glass of juice instead of a cigarette for a "pick-me-up."
- Remember: Cutting down can help you quit, but it's not a substitute for quitting. If you're down to about 7 cigarettes a day, it's time to set your target quit date and get ready to stick to it.

Don't Smoke "Automatically"

- Smoke only those cigarettes you really want. Catch yourself before you light up a cigarette out of pure habit.
- Don't empty your ashtrays. This will remind you of how many cigarettes you've smoked each day, and the sight and the smell of stale cigarette butts will be very unpleasant.
- Make yourself aware of each cigarette by using the opposite hand or putting cigarettes in an unfamiliar location or a different pocket to break the automatic reach.
- If you light up many times during the day without even thinking about it, try to look in a mirror each time you put a match to your cigarette—you may decide you don't need it.

Make Smoking Inconvenient

- Stop buying cigarettes by the carton. Wait until one pack is empty before you buy another.
- Stop carrying cigarettes with you at home or at work. Make them difficult to get to.

Make Smoking Unpleasant

- Smoke only under circumstances that aren't especially pleasurable for you. If you like to smoke with others, smoke alone. Turn your chair to an empty corner and focus only on the cigarette you are smoking and all its many negative effects.

- **Collect all your cigarette butts in one large glass container as a visual reminder of the filth made by smoking.**