

How to Quit Smoking

» Planning Will Increase Chances of Success

If you are one of the millions of people in this country who smoke, quitting will offer multiple health benefits. In fact, when you quit, your body will begin to heal within hours of extinguishing your last cigarette. Toxins leave your body, your pulse rate goes back to normal, and oxygen rises to a normal level.

Why Quit?

It's a fact: Smoking harms nearly every part of your body. For example, smoking causes about 90% of deaths from lung cancer in women and almost 80% of deaths from lung cancer in men.

Smoking also causes cancers of the bladder, pancreas, stomach, cervix, kidney, esophagus and larynx (voice box). It can also cause a form of leukemia.

Smoking causes coronary heart disease and lung diseases such as emphysema. It doubles your risk of having a stroke, and it reduces circulation by narrowing the blood vessels.

And if that's not enough, consider that tobacco smoke contains 4,000 chemicals, 250 of which are known to be harmful. Fifty of those chemicals can cause cancer.

Some chemicals in tobacco smoke are also found in chemical weapons, gasoline and paint thinners.

No matter how old you are when you quit, you are less likely than smokers to die of a smoking-related illness.

Your Quit Date

Once you decide to quit, pick a date within the next 2 weeks as your official quit date. You could choose a special day, such as your birthday or anniversary, Independence Day, New Year's Day, World No Tobacco Day (May 31) or the Great American Smokeout (the third Thursday of each November).

Make sure to tell your friends, family and coworkers that you plan to quit and that you may need their support. You could even talk to someone close to you who is a smoker: Ask them to quit with you, or make sure they don't smoke around you.

And in anticipation of your quit date, get rid of all cigarettes or tobacco products you may have at home, in your car or at work.

Identify Your Triggers

When smoking has been a part of your life, it can be difficult to quit. You may smoke when you are bored, angry or stressed. You may also smoke when you do certain things, such as drive, drink coffee or alcohol, watch TV, take a work break or talk on the phone.

Write down the situations that prompt you to smoke. These are called triggers. Then you can work on avoiding these situations.

Withdrawal Symptoms

Quitting smoking may cause many withdrawal symptoms, or it may cause only a few. You may feel depressed, or you may have trouble sleeping. You may feel hungry or gain weight. You may get cranky, frustrated or mad, or you may feel anxious, nervous or restless. You may have trouble thinking clearly.

These feelings are your body's way of telling you that it is learning to live smoke-free. They will go away in time.

Products That Can Help

The cause of your addiction is nicotine. If you need help quitting, you could try a nicotine replacement product to help relieve cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

Some of these products are available over the counter, including the nicotine patch, nicotine gum and nicotine lozenge. You need a prescription to use the nicotine nasal spray or nicotine inhaler.

Two medicines are also available by prescription to help you: Zyban and Chantix. Talk to your nurse practitioner about which of these products might be right for you.

Are You Pregnant?

If you are pregnant or even thinking about having a baby, quit smoking immediately. Women who smoke have a harder time getting pregnant. If you smoke while you are pregnant, your baby may be born small or have learning problems. The baby could be cranky and restless and get sick more often.

Women who smoke are also at risk for losing their baby, having a still-born baby or having a baby more likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome. **NP**

Information sources for this handout: Smokefree.gov, the National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov).

Additional Notes:
