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## Smoking Cessation

### The Hazards of Smoking

Tobacco is responsible for 1 of every 5 deaths in the United States. That adds up to over 435,000 lives lost each year. All in all, the average nonsmoker lives about 14 years longer than the average smoker. Smoking is a major cause of chronic illness in over 8.5 million Americans. It is also a major cause of cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks, strokes, and peripheral artery disease. About 20% of all cardiac deaths are caused by smoking. In addition, at least 90% of all patients with emphysema owe their lung disease to smoking. Chronic bronchitis and pneumonia are among the other lung diseases that are increased in smokers. And there's more. Smoking contributes to many other health problems ranging from cataracts, sinusitis, and dental disorders to aging skin, heartburn, osteoporosis, and poor pregnancy outcomes. The more you smoke, the higher your risks—but even a few cigarettes a day will harm your health. “Light” and “low tar” cigarettes are no safer than high-test brands. The only truly safe dose of tobacco is zero.



### The Benefits of Quitting

Quitting helps, even if you've smoked for years. Within days, your blood vessels will regain much of the normal functions that are damaged by smoking. Within weeks, you'll be able to taste food better and your sense of smell will recover from tobacco's assault. Within months, symptoms of chronic bronchitis ease up, and lung function improves within a year. Quitting reduces the risk of heart attack and stroke within 2 to 5 years, and the risk of lung cancer begins to drop substantially within 5 years. People who kick the habit, regardless of age, live longer than those who continue to smoke. And since each pack of cigarettes costs the U.S. \$7.18 in medical care and lost productivity, quitting will help America's budget as well as yours.

### How to Quit

Nicotine is addictive and quitting is hard work, but there is no way to succeed without really trying. If you understand why quitting is important and set your mind to it, you can quit. There are four basic strategies for quitting: do it yourself, seek behavioral support, use nicotine replacement therapy, or use prescription drugs. Most smokers start by trying to quit on their own, but many end up needing several methods and several attempts to successfully kick the habit. And even after you quit, it's important to keep your guard up. Just as an alcoholic can fall off the wagon after a single drink, just one cigarette can fire up your nicotine craving even after years of abstinence.





**Kicking the Habit:  
*Do It Yourself***

Don't kid yourself by trying to cut down; nearly everyone who tries slides back up to their usual dose of nicotine. Cold turkey is the way to go, but it takes preparation. And even if you try it without professional help, cooperation from family and friends can be important.

Here are some tips for quitting on your own:

- Make a list of reasons to quit and another list of people who have kicked the habit. The first list will remind you why quitting is important, and the second will show you that folks who are no stronger or smarter than you have succeeded. Keep your lists handy and refer to them whenever you begin to waver.
- Try to get other smokers in your household or circle of friends to join you in quitting.
- Pick a quitting date and stick to it. Plan to quit on a special day such as a birthday or the American Cancer Society's annual November Smokeout. Steer clear of stressful periods, and avoid holidays if you are likely to be invited to smoke-filled parties.

Anticipate withdrawal symptoms such as grumpiness, restlessness, irritability, hunger, headache, anxiety, and drowsiness or insomnia. The discomfort usually peaks 1 to 3 weeks after you quit, and then it gradually diminishes. To get through the rough patches, stock up on low-calorie snacks and sugarless gum or candy to keep your mouth busy. Plan enjoyable diversions to keep your mind busy. Think of ways to keep your hands busy; doodling, knitting, or using worry beads are examples.

- If you feel tense, try meditation, deep breathing, or yoga.
- Begin an exercise program. It will relieve tension, promote good sleep, and help control weight gain. Walking for 30 minutes a day can also help.
- Eat a healthy diet
- Stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Reward yourself. Put your tobacco money aside and spend it on a special treat.
- Think positively—you can quit. Take it one day at a time. And if you slip, try, try again—either on your own or with one or more of the other strategies for quitting.



**Kicking the Habit:  
*Behavioral Support***

Quitting is your responsibility; it may be hard, but it doesn't have to be lonely. Professional counseling and support groups can be very helpful. Many employers, health plans, and hospitals offer individual or group counseling. Your doctor or your local chapter of the American Lung Association or American Cancer Society can refer you to a program near you. Telephone support can also help; you can try it for yourself by calling the National Smoking Cessation Hotline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. Some smokers have also found hypnosis helpful.

### **Nicotine Replacement Therapy**

Cigarette smoke contains thousands of chemicals. Many are harmful, but nicotine is the most addicting. Like other addictive substances, it acts on receptors in the brain's "reward center," creating a sensation of pleasure and a craving for more nicotine. The craving has made billions of dollars for big tobacco companies, but it has cost taxpayers billions more.

Nicotine replacement therapy can short-circuit the craving without the other harmful, disease-producing chemicals. Nicotine replacement therapy is safe—you get less nicotine than from cigarettes without the tar, carbon monoxide, or other damaging substances found in tobacco. If you plan to use nicotine replacement therapy you should begin on the day you quit smoking. If you are a heavy smoker, you will need a higher dose; since the average cigarette delivers 1 to 2 mg of nicotine, you can estimate how much nicotine you will need. Start with the full dose, then gradually taper down over several months. Under-dosing is more common than overdosing, but you should not smoke while using nicotine replacement therapy. Five types of nicotine replacement therapies are available in the U.S.: patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers, or nasal sprays.

### **Prescription Drugs**

Some prescription drugs have also been approved to help you quit smoking. Talk to your doctor to find out if these options are right for you.



### **For more information:**

#### **American Lung Association**

800-LUNG-USA  
www.ffsonline.org

#### **American Cancer Society**

800-ACS-2345  
www.cancer.org

#### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

800-CDC-1311  
www.cdc.gov/tobacco

#### **Try to Stop Tobacco Resource Center**

800-TRY-TO-STOP  
www.trytostop.org



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