

# Smoking cessation: Create a quit-smoking plan

Create a plan to cope with hurdles you may face as you quit smoking.

[By Mayo Clinic Staff](#)

If you're like many smokers and other tobacco users, you know you should quit; you just aren't sure how to do it. Or you may have tried quitting in the past, but you started smoking again.

Creating a quit-smoking plan may improve your chances of stopping for good. Having a plan helps you set expectations, line up the support you need, prepare for cravings, identify and practice coping skills, and stay motivated.

The following ideas can help you create a plan.

## List your reasons for quitting

Only you can decide when you're ready to quit smoking. Therefore, you need to be clear on why you are making the decision and what will motivate you to quit.

Make a list of your reasons for quitting — this foundation will support your quit-smoking plan. Reasons for quitting might include:

- Improving your health
- Lowering your risk of disease in the future
- Not exposing family or friends to secondhand smoke
- Saving money

## Pick a quit day

Pick a specific day within the next month to quit smoking. If your quit day is too far in the future, you may find it hard to follow through, but you need to give yourself time to prepare. You might pick a random date, a day that would likely be less stressful, or a day that holds special meaning for you, such as a birthday or holiday. Mark the date on your calendar.

Although many smokers believe they would prefer to reduce smoking gradually, recent evidence indicates that abrupt quitting — setting a quit date and sticking to it — results in successful long-term quitting.

## Prepare for your quit day

Research has shown that a combination of medical treatments and behavioral counseling improves the likelihood of successfully quitting.

These interventions take time and planning. You also need time to consider and prepare other support, tools and strategies. Your preparations may include the following:

- **Ask your doctor about medications.** Treatments that can lessen cravings include nicotine replacement skin patches, lozenges, gum, inhalers or nasal sprays. These treatments begin on your quit day. Other, non-nicotine medication can help reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms by mimicking how nicotine functions in your body. Treatment with these drugs, such as varenicline (Chantix), should begin one to two weeks before your quit day.
- **Find a support program.** Individual, group or telephone counseling can provide you with needed support and help you develop coping skills. Your doctor may refer you to local resources or support groups. To reach the National Cancer Institute's telephone quit line, call 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848). To find your

state's quit line, call 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669).

- **Identify online tools and apps.** Online tools for creating and implementing a quit plan are available from the [National Cancer Institute](https://smokefree.gov/build-your-quit-plan) (https://smokefree.gov/build-your-quit-plan) and the [Truth Initiative](http://www.becomeanex.org/) (www.becomeanex.org/). These programs provide chat services, text messaging or apps for mobile devices to provide support and coping strategies. These and other cellphone-based services appear to increase smoking cessation success.
- **List your smoking triggers and habits.** Make a list of your common triggers for smoking or your typical daily smoking habits. Do you smoke when you're stressed? Do you always smoke after a meal? Do you smoke during work breaks? Identifying patterns can help you determine when you will most likely need support or some kind of distraction.
- **Tell people.** Let family, friends and co-workers know about your quit day. Make them your allies. They can provide moral support. You can ask them to check in with you, help plan activities to get your mind off smoking and be patient with your changes in mood. Ask friends who smoke not to smoke around you or offer you a cigarette.
- **Clean house.** Rid your home, car, office and other places of your past smoking supplies, including cigarettes, lighters, matches and ashtrays. Wash coats and other clothing items that may have lingering smells of tobacco. Clean upholstered furniture or curtains.
- **Stock up on substitutes.** Have on hand items that you can substitute for the cigarette you're used to having in your mouth, such as sugarless gum, hard candy, straws, cinnamon sticks or carrot sticks. You can also find items to keep your hands busy, such as a squeeze ball. Keep these substitutes where you would normally leave your cigarettes or ashtray.
- **Schedule a dental cleaning.** Have your teeth cleaned to remove nicotine stains. The fresh start on your teeth may be a motivation not to smoke.
- **Reflect.** If you've tried to quit smoking before but took it up again, think about what challenges you faced and why you started again. What worked and what didn't? Think about what you can do differently this time.

## Handling quit day

Getting through your quit day can be emotionally and physically challenging, especially if strong tobacco cravings strike. Try these tips to help manage your quit day:

- Don't smoke, not even "just one."
- Use nicotine replacement therapy if you've chosen that method.
- If you are having strong cravings and withdrawal despite using medication, talk to your doctor about adjusting the medication plan to better control these symptoms.
- Remind yourself of your reasons to stop smoking.
- Drink plenty of water or juice.
- Keep physically active.
- Avoid situations and people that trigger your urge to smoke.
- Attend a support group, counseling session or stop-smoking class.
- Practice stress management and relaxation techniques.
- Keep your hands busy with your cigarette substitutes or an activity, such as writing or knitting.
- Keep your mind distracted when necessary with a book or crossword puzzle.

## Staying quit

With a quit-smoking plan to guide you, you'll have resources you can lean on when you quit smoking. The more resources you have in place — support groups, nicotine replacement, medications, coaching, your doctor's advice — the more likely you are to quit your smoking habit for good.

## [Hide references](#)

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