

Quit Smoking

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Making the Decision

Most people recognize the many health, personal, and social reasons for quitting smoking; yet millions of people in the United States continue to smoke cigarettes. Because cigarette smoking is an addiction, stopping smoking takes commitment, planning, and support from friends and family.

Every smoker is different - the reasons for smoking and the reasons for wanting to quit. This is also true of the things that help smokers stop. Pick out the suggestions that you think will help you.

It seems hard to stop smoking, because smokers develop a smoking habit. But for every smoking habit, there are some great reasons to stop. It's important to recognize the difference between the myths of smoking and the facts.

Myth versus Fact

1. MYTH - I'm under a lot of stress and smoking relaxes me. FACT - Your body is used to nicotine, so you naturally feel more relaxed when you give your body a substance it's come to depend on. But nicotine really is a stimulant - it raises your heart rate and blood pressure. Most ex-smokers feel much less nervous just a few weeks after quitting.

2. MYTH - Smoking makes you think better. FACT - Smoking actually deprives your brain of oxygen, despite the fact that nicotine temporarily makes you feel more alert. Eight hours after you quit smoking, blood oxygen returns to normal.

3. MYTH - I've already cut down to a safe level. FACT - Cutting down is a good first step, but there's a big difference in the benefits to you between smoking a little and not smoking at all. After you've cut back to about 7-10 cigarettes a day, it's time to set a quit date.

4. MYTH - I smoke only safe, low tar/low nicotine cigarettes. FACT - These cigarettes still contain harmful substances and smokers who use them inhale more often and more deeply to maintain their nicotine intake.

5. MYTH - It's too hard to quit. I don't have the will power. FACT - Quitting and staying away from cigarettes is hard, but it's not impossible. More than three million Americans quit every year. It's important for you to remember that many people have had to try more than once before they become ex-smokers, but they have done it and so can you.

6. MYTH - I'm worried about gaining weight. FACT - Most smokers will gain, on average, between five and ten pounds after quitting. Gaining weight isn't inevitable and you can prevent it.

7. MYTH - I blew it. I smoked a cigarette. FACT - Smoking one, or even a few, cigarettes doesn't mean you've "blown it". It does mean that you have to strengthen your determination to quit, and try again - harder. You've already quit for days, perhaps weeks, which proves that you don't need cigarettes and that you can be a successful quitter.

Preparing to Quit

Call the QuitLine at 800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) and speak to an expert quit coach anytime seven days a week. You'll get private counseling, support and advice on creating your quit plan. You'll learn how to develop skills to break your tobacco habits. You can talk to a live person who will help you decide which quitting products or medications will work for you. You can also go online at www.quitnow.net/idaho to access Project Filter's web-based quit program. You will find quitting tools on the site including a Quit Guide workbook to help you stick with your plan and Web Coach which gives you access to a private, online community where you can watch videos, track your progress and join in discussions with others in the program. On the Quitnow.net you'll find a community of friendly people who will support you and help you quit.

Set a quit date two to four weeks from now. This will give you the time to get ready to quit. Smoke less as your stop date nears. Write down why you want to stop. Tell your friends and family what kind of help you'll need.

It's important that you consider how you're going to quit. Many people are successful going "cold turkey", but you may want to consider using nicotine replacement therapy (nicotine patches, lozenges, or gum) or a prescription smoking aid. These can be especially helpful for those people who are severely addicted to nicotine - for example, people who light their first cigarette within thirty minutes after waking. Make sure you understand how to use them correctly.

Quitting

The day before you quit be sure to throw away all your cigarettes and matches. Hide your lighters and ash trays. You might also want to clean your clothes to get rid of the cigarette smell.

Keep very busy on the big quit date. Go to the movies, exercise, take long walks, go bike riding. Remind your family and friends that this is your quit date and ask them to help you over the rough spots of the first couple of days and weeks. Consider buying yourself a treat or doing something special to celebrate.

Use of Nicotine Patches

- Put the patch on a dry area without hair, such as your stomach, upper chest, back, or outer arm.
- Press firmly for ten seconds to be sure it sticks.
- Wear the patch for 24 hours. Put the next patch in a different place. Reuse the old site after one week.
- If you have trouble sleeping, you can remove the patch just before bedtime. However, you'll have a craving when you awaken and will need to reapply a fresh patch as soon as possible.
- Contact your doctor if you have any side effects, including dizziness, upset stomach, bad headaches, vomiting, cold sweats, drooling, confusion, blurred vision, hearing problems, weakness or fainting.
- It's absolutely essential that you **do not smoke** while you have on the patch as this can be very dangerous for your health.

Use of Nicotine Lozenges

- If you smoke within 30 minutes of waking in the morning use the 4 mg strength. If not, use the 2 mg.
- Allow the lozenge to dissolve slowly over 20-30 minutes. Occasionally shift it from one side of the mouth to the other.
- Do not chew or swallow the lozenge. Nicotine is absorbed only through the lining of the mouth. Any nicotine that is swallowed may cause heartburn, hiccups, and stomach upset.
- You may feel a tingling sensation in the mouth.
- Use 1 lozenge every 1-2 hours for the first 6 weeks; try to use at least 9 per day. Use more lozenges as needed. Then slowly taper over the next 6 weeks.
- It's absolutely essential that you **do not smoke** while you use the lozenges.

Use of Nicotine Gum

- Nicotine gum is not like ordinary soft gum. Nicotine is absorbed only through the lining of the mouth. Any nicotine that is swallowed may cause heartburn, hiccups, and stomach upset.
- Only chew or massage the gum until you feel your mouth tingle. Then park the gum between cheek and gum until you feel the need for more nicotine.
- Don't eat or drink anything while chewing, or for 15 minutes before using nicotine gum.
- Each piece of gum usually lasts about thirty minutes. Most people require ten to twelve pieces of gum per day (max 24) during the early phase of quitting.
- Taper off use of the gum after 1 to 2 months of abstinence (decrease 1 piece per day every 4-7 days).
- If you should have any of the side effects mentioned with use of the patch, contact your doctor.

How you feel when you quit depends on how much you smoked, how sensitive you are to nicotine and how well you get ready to quit. You may crave a cigarette or be hungrier than usual. You may feel edgy and have trouble concentrating. You may also cough more at first or have headaches.

These symptoms of quitting happen because your body is used to nicotine. They are worst during the first few days after quitting. Most are gone in a few weeks. Some things you can do to get past urges include chewing sugarless gum, taking a walk, breathing deeply, drinking a glass of water or calling a friend.

After You Quit

The first few days after you quit, spend as much free time as possible in places where smoking isn't allowed, such as libraries, stores and churches. Drink large quantities of water and fruit juice, but avoid liquids that contain caffeine. Try to avoid alcohol, coffee and other beverages that you associate with cigarette smoking. If you miss having something in your mouth, try toothpicks. Also avoid situations you strongly associate with smoking, such as watching your favorite TV program or sitting in your favorite chair.

Change your habits to make smoking difficult, impossible, or unnecessary. For example, it's hard to smoke while you're swimming, jogging or playing tennis or handball. Enjoy having a clean mouth taste and maintain it by brushing your teeth frequently and using mouth wash. Try not to replace smoking with overeating. When you get the crazies, keep oral substitutes handy, like carrots, pickles, sunflower seeds, apples, celery, raisins, or sugarless gum. Learn to relax quickly and deeply. Instead of having a cigarette, take a long deep breath, count to ten, and release it, repeating this five times. Visualize a soothing, pleasurable situation, and get away from it all for one moment. Never allow yourself to think that "one cigarette won't hurt" - it will.

Remaining a Non-Smoker

The key to living as a non-smoker is to avoid letting your urges or cravings for a cigarette lead you to smoke. Don't kid yourself - even though you've made a commitment not to smoke, you will sometimes be tempted. Think about why you quit. Look at your list several times per day, especially when you're hit with the urge to smoke. But instead of giving into the urge, you can use it as a learning experience.

First, remind yourself that you've quit and you're a non-smoker. Then look closely at your urge to smoke, which often hits at predictable times. The trick is to anticipate those times and find ways to cope, without smoking. Naturally, it won't be easy at first, but remember, even if you slip, it doesn't mean an end to the non-smoking you. It does mean that you should try to identify what triggered your slip, strengthen your commitment to quitting, and try again!