



Greenville Medical Associates

Quitting Smoking

Overview

Tobacco use is the most common preventable cause of death. About half of the people who don't quit smoking will die of smoking-related problems. Quitting smoking is important for your health and provides many benefits. Soon after you quit, your circulation begins to improve, and your blood pressure starts to return to normal. Your sense of smell and taste return and breathing starts to become easier. In the long term, giving up tobacco can help you live longer. Your risk of getting cancer decreases with each year you stay smoke-free.

Quitting is not easy. You may have short-term effects such as weight gain, irritability and anxiety. Some people try several times before succeeding. There are many ways to quit smoking. Some people stop "cold turkey." Others benefit from step-by-step manuals, counseling or medicines or products that help reduce nicotine addiction. Your health care provider can help you find the best way for you to quit.

Introduction

Quitting smoking also known as smoking cessation, is one of the most important things that smokers can do to enhance the quality and length of their life, and the lives of people around them.

Every year, millions of deaths are attributed to smoking. These deaths happen as a result of cancers, breathing problems, strokes, and many other smoke-related health problems.

Quitting smoking is not easy, but with the right plan you can do it. This health information explains smoking, why you should quit, what you can expect, what you can do to increase your chances of success, and information on how to quit smoking for good.

Smoking

Cigarette smoke contains thousands of chemical agents. At least 60 of these chemicals cause cancer!

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The addictive ingredient in cigarette smoke is nicotine. Nicotine is very addictive. Cigarette companies are aware of this and manipulate levels of nicotine in cigarettes to make sure that smokers become addicted.

Nicotine is quickly absorbed into the bloodstream. Within 30 seconds of entering the body, it reaches the brain. Nicotine causes the brain to release special chemicals that create feelings of pleasure and energy. The feelings that are created are usually called a “high” or a “buzz.”

Within half an hour, the “buzz” fades away and the smoker is left feeling depressed and tired. This feeling is what causes smokers to light up the next cigarette. The cycle of stimulation and depression keeps repeating, which leads to addiction.

Since the body is able to build up a high tolerance to nicotine, smokers gradually smoke more and more in order to get the same “high.”

It has been proven that the craving for nicotine increases as levels of emotional and physical stress increase. Feeling stressed out can lead to more smoking.

Quitting smoking may be difficult, but it is one of the most important things that a smoker can do for his or her health.

Why Quit?

There are many reasons that encourage smokers to take the first step towards quitting smoking. We will discuss the most common reasons in this section.

Most people quit smoking for health reasons. Smoking is responsible for most lung cancer deaths. It is also the main cause of lung diseases such as emphysema, COPD, and bronchitis.

Smoking is also one of the leading causes of heart disease. It can lead to many other health problems, including sexual dysfunction, blindness, strokes, and blood clots.

Smoking causes bad breath, dark stained teeth, and wrinkles in the face.

Some people wait until they are diagnosed with a disease to quit smoking. But many people take a pre-emptive strike and stop smoking before they get sick.

When you quit smoking, the body tends to recover and repair some of the damage caused by smoking. It is never too late to quit.

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Your chance of heart attack is reduced 4 hours after you quit. Within 3 months of quitting, lung function improves by about 30%.

In about one year after quitting smoking, the risk of heart problems is half what it would have been if the patient had continued to smoke.

After 10 years of smoking cessation, the death rate from lung cancer is nearly cut in half.

The risks of other cancers also go down, and the risk of strokes becomes similar to that of non smokers.

Some people quit for loved ones. People who are often around tobacco smoke have a much higher risk of developing cancer or lung diseases. This includes children.

Children exposed to tobacco smoke have more risk of dying from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and having lung infections, ear problems and severe asthma. This is known as second hand smoke.

Recent studies have proven that residue from tobacco smoke can linger in carpets, upholstered surfaces, and can cause health risks, even if no one is actively smoking in the area. This is known as third hand smoke!

Many people quit because they realize it is not cool to smoke. In the past, it was seen as cool to smoke because of advertising and movies.

Peer pressure may make some high school and college students think smoking is cool. But, most people now see it as an uncool thing to do.

Quit for your wallet. Smoking is expensive!

If you consider how much you spend on smoking each day, it may not seem like that much. Multiply that amount by 365, or one year (365 days), and it quickly adds up.

If you multiply that number by the number of years you have been smoking, you can see how smoking impacts your money.

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Challenges of Quitting

Because the body is addicted to nicotine, stopping smoking suddenly may cause withdrawal symptoms.

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms include:

- Hostility and irritability.
- Impatience, restlessness and anxiety.
- Weight gain or increased appetite.
- Feeling depressed.
- Difficulty concentrating.

Ask your healthcare provider about medications to help you quit smoking. Some medications are over-the-counter and some are by prescription only.

Nicotine replacement therapy is a treatment that comes in the form of nicotine gum, inhalers, nasal sprays or patches. It is used to decrease nicotine withdrawal symptoms by providing small amounts of nicotine.

Your doctor can also prescribe medications to help with withdrawal symptoms.

Behavioral therapy helps people quit using tobacco with counseling, cognitive therapy, self-help classes, step-by-step manuals and telephone help lines.

Joining a support group can also help you quit smoking. In support groups, you join others who are struggling to stop smoking. You share your experiences, tips, successes and failures so you can learn from each other.

Support groups can be in person but can also be online. Take some time to explore what's available and take advantage of it. If you need suggestions, ask your healthcare provider or your librarian to find local support groups for you.

Deciding to Quit

Quitting smoking is not an easy thing to do, but the benefits are worth it. The first step is to decide that you want to quit.

Think about why you want to quit. Write down these reasons and put them in a safe place. This list can

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be helpful to you, especially if you feel like giving up.

Pick a quit date, write it on your calendar. Try and pick a date that is within the next month. If you pick a date that is too far off, it may be more difficult to stick with it.

Tell your friends and family what you plan to do and when you plan to do it. Ask them for their support.

Keep a notebook with you for a few days. Write down when and where you smoke.

Find out what makes you feel like smoking. Then think and decide what you will do instead of smoking in these situations. For instance, if you smoke after breakfast every morning, you could drink a glass of orange juice instead.

Tips for Succeeding

Here are 10 tips for succeeding in stopping smoking:

1. Throw away all your cigarettes and smoking accessories, including lighters and ashtrays. These things may make it easier for you to relapse. Remember, you have no need for an ashtray or a pack of cigarettes if you are now a non-smoker!
2. Do not make an exception. Even smoking one cigarette or a puff can decrease your chances of success.
3. Stay active. Try walking, cleaning, or anything that keeps you moving or occupied.
4. Stay hydrated. Drink a lot of water or juice. Avoid or cut back on alcohol and caffeine. These can affect your body differently after quitting and can become a relapse trigger for many people.
5. At first, try to avoid people, places and situations that may tempt you to smoke. After you have quit for a while, these urges may be lessened or you may be able to deal with them better.
6. Treat yourself as you succeed in not smoking. A massage or a hot bath can be a great reward for going an entire day without smoking.
7. If you slip up and do smoke, remember that all is not lost. One cigarette does not make you a smoker again and does not mean that you have failed. Recommit to not smoking and stop immediately again.
8. If you have joined a support group, make sure to communicate with its members when you need support.

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9. If you are going to use nicotine replacement therapy, make sure to start it and stick to it.
10. If you do relapse and start smoking again, you can still quit. Not a lot of people are able to quit for good on their first try. It may take you a few times to quit for good.

Take a look at your previous attempts and figure out some of the things that may have made it unsuccessful. Make some changes to your quit plan and pick a new date to try again.

Conclusion

Quitting smoking is one of the most important things a smoker can do for his or her health. It can be difficult, but it is not impossible.

Quitting smoking has many benefits. It can improve the length and quality of your life, put more money back into your pocket, and help protect your family and friends from the dangers of second hand smoke.

Setting a quit date and putting together a plan can raise your chances of success. Medications and support groups can be helpful for some people.

Smoking cessation is difficult, but you can do it! You can do a lot to help yourself stop smoking.

Remember, if you don't succeed the first time, do not give up. By changing your quit plan based on your experiences, you can become successful. It is never too late to quit.

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