



It's time to quit.



When it comes to smoking, be a quitter

Quitting smoking is the most important thing smokers can do to live a longer, healthier life.¹ Yet almost one in every six American adults smoke.¹

You're not weak, you're addicted

If you've tried to stop smoking and always seem to pick it up again, you're not alone. Nicotine, the drug in tobacco, is as addictive as heroin or cocaine. The chemicals in tobacco products affect the heart and blood vessels, your hormones, your respiratory system, your metabolism and your brain. And if you are a woman who is pregnant, nicotine affects your baby in the same ways.

A smoker who tries to quit faces up to a few weeks of withdrawal. The physical addiction to nicotine is in full force after just a few weeks of smoking. But also, there is a mental addiction to the habit of smoking.

Making it through the cravings

Between the withdrawal symptoms and the challenge of breaking a habit, it's no wonder many smokers have a hard time quitting. Here are some ways to cope:^{2,3}

- **Spend time in places where you can't smoke.** Try the library, museums, bookstores and malls.
- **Change other habits too.** If you used to smoke when you watched TV, unplug the TV set. If you had to smoke with your morning coffee, have tea instead. If you change your routine, you are less likely to feel something is missing.
- **List your reasons.** Make a list of all your reasons for quitting. Keep copies of it in your wallet, at your desk and on the refrigerator.
- **Don't be fooled.** Remember, there is no such thing as "just one" cigarette or puff. The strong desire to smoke will eventually pass.
- **Stall.** If you feel like you are about to give in, tell yourself you have to wait at least ten minutes. This will often be enough time for you to get past the craving.
- **Reward yourself.** Save the money you would have spent on tobacco for a daily treat or a major purchase.

Using e-cigarettes, or vaping, is not a healthy alternative to cigarettes or smokeless tobacco. Vapor from an e-cigarette contains harmful chemicals that can cause cancer, along with other health problems. Vaping around other people exposes them to harmful chemicals, as well.⁴



Sources

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: Smoking & Tobacco Use Fast Facts (accessed January 2017): http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/
- 2 Taylor, Adrian H., Michael H. Ussher and Guy Faulkner. "The acute effects of exercise on cigarette cravings, withdrawal symptoms, affect and smoking behaviour: a systematic review." *Addiction* 102 (2007): 534-43
- 3 Mayo Clinic website: Quit Smoking (accessed January 2017): <http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/quit-smoking/basics/quit-smoking-action-plan/hlv-20049487>
- 4 American Lung Association website: E-cigarettes and Lung Health (accessed January 2017): <http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/smoking-facts/e-cigarettes-and-lung-health.html>
- 5 American Cancer Society website: Guide to Quitting Smoking (accessed January 2017): <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/guide-quit-smoking.html>

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The symptoms of nicotine withdrawal include:⁵

- Dizziness (for the first day or two)
- Depression, frustration or anger
- Trouble focusing
- Headache
- Trouble sleeping and bad dreams
- Nausea or hunger

Getting help

Between medicines and counseling programs, there is help for people who want to quit. Getting counseling and support can double your chances of success. Nicotine Anonymous (nicotine-anonymous.org) and smokefree.gov offer support on the phone, via text, online and in person. You can call 800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) and 800-ACS-2345 (227-2345) for toll-free support.

Drug treatments can also help. Nicotine replacement therapy gives you nicotine through gums, patches, sprays, lozenges or inhalers, without the other dangerous chemicals in cigarettes. This way you can focus on breaking the habit of smoking before you have to go through the physical withdrawal. There are also prescription drugs that help with withdrawal symptoms or change the way your body reacts to nicotine. Your doctor can help you make a plan to kick the habit.

Timeline for withdrawal

Quitting smoking is hard, but worth it!

Withdrawal symptoms usually show up within a few hours of the last cigarette. They are at their worst on the second or third day, then they gradually go away over the next couple of weeks. But while you're cranky, tired and depressed, good things are happening to your body.

- **Within minutes:** Your blood pressure drops.
- **Within 12 hours:** The level of carbon monoxide in your blood returns to normal.
- **Within a week:** Most of the nicotine has left your body.
- **Within three months:** Your circulation and breathing improve.
- **One to nine months after quitting:** Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; your lungs regain the ability to clean themselves, reducing your risk of infection.
- **One year after quitting:** Your risk of heart disease goes down.
- **Five years after quitting:** Your risk of stroke goes down.
- **Ten years after quitting:** Your risk of getting cancer of the lung, mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix and pancreas goes down.
- **Fifteen years after quitting:** You have no more risk of heart disease than if you had never smoked.

