

Making a Plan to Quit Smoking

Millions of people smoke every day, despite the health risks and the fact that quitting would be one of the single biggest improvements to their health. However, this knowledge does not make it any easier to quit.

Whether you are a social smoker or a pack-a-day smoker, quitting is a process and can be overwhelming. Fortunately, it's possible to replace habits, manage cravings and join the millions who have successfully quit for good.

Why is it hard to quit?

Smoking is a psychological habit that creates a chemical dependency, which makes quitting difficult. Over time, smoking becomes a daily ritual triggered by virtually any stimulus. Between the habit-forming substances found in cigarettes and the mental associations, it's easy to feel that your smoke breaks are necessary in order to manage your stress, even when they are not.

To successfully quit smoking, a person will need to recognize the motivations behind the urge to smoke and respond with more appropriate choices. Success in quitting requires motivation, determination, social support, an understanding of what to expect and a personal game plan.

The key to quitting is to first understand why you smoke. Smoking releases a tidal wave of hormones from the brain that causes feelings of pleasure, energy and raises the desire for more cigarettes.

Smoking can temporarily make unpleasant feelings evaporate into thin air. Memorizing the acronym H.A.L.T. – (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) will provide you with a powerful checklist to help you decode the urges. Nine times out of 10, a craving can be traced to one of these four feelings.

Even though cigarettes can make you feel as if they're providing comfort, it's crucial to remember that there are healthier and more effective ways to deal with these feelings, such as exercise, meditation, sensory relaxation strategies or simple breathing exercises to satisfy all of the same brain circuits.

There is no single right way to quit smoking, but there are strategic steps to take that increase your chance of success. According to the American Cancer Society, successful quitting is a matter of commitment and planning so get started today.

5 Keys to Quit Smoking

Studies have shown that these five steps will help you quit and quit for good. You have the best chances of quitting if you use them together.

- **S = Set a quit date.** Change your environment. Get rid of ALL cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays in your home, car and at work. Review your past attempts to quit, thinking about what worked and what did not.
- **T = Tell family, friends and co-workers that you plan to quit.** Ask them not to smoke around you. Get individual, group or telephone counseling. The more counseling you have the better your chances are of quitting. Call your local health department for information about programs in your area.
- **A = Anticipate and plan for challenges you will face.** Most relapses occur within the first 3 months after quitting. However, do not be discouraged if you start smoking again. Remember, most people try several times before they finally quit.

- **R = Retrain yourself.** Replace healthy behaviors whenever an urge to smoke strikes. Talk to someone, brush your teeth or go for a walk. When you first try to quit, change your routine. Use a different route to work, drink tea instead of coffee or eat breakfast in a different place. Do something to reduce your stress. Plan something enjoyable to do every day. Drink a lot of water and other fluids.
- **T = Talk to your doctor** about nicotine replacement therapies and medications to help you quit.

Resources

- American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org
- American Lung Association: www.lung.org

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-LINK

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNow SM

Web ID: LivingME

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