

Tips to Help You Quit Smoking

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 480,000 Americans die each year from smoking and smoking-related illnesses. Quitting smoking now can help you live a longer, healthier life, and help you look better, feel better and protect your family from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Use the following information to help you find the path to a smoke-free life.

Benefits of Quitting

Your body will begin to display improvements within 20 minutes of your last cigarette. Some immediate benefits include:

- Improved circulation
- Normalized blood pressure and pulse rate
- A restored sense of smell and taste
- Easier breathing
- Normalized levels of oxygen and carbon monoxide

Some of the long-term benefits are a decreased risk of heart attack, stroke, lung cancer and other smoking-related cancers.

Preparing to Quit

- **Set a quit date:** Choosing a specific date to quit can give you the opportunity to prepare for the challenge that lies ahead. As your quit date approaches, you may want to consider cutting back gradually in order to ease the transition.
- **Get support:** There are many programs and support groups available to help you quit smoking. At a minimum, you may want to tell your friends and family members in order to get their support.
- **Reduce availability:** When you make the decision to quit, throw away any cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays and other smoking-related items. Do not keep a pack "just in case," as this may make it harder to quit.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy Options

There are many over-the-counter and prescription products available to help ease the effects of nicotine withdrawal. Some of the more popular options include:

- **Nicotine patch:** The patch provides a continuous dose of nicotine throughout the day. As treatment progresses, the nicotine level is gradually reduced until the patch is no longer needed.
- **Nicotine gum:** This releases small amounts of nicotine into the bloodstream. Many people choose to chew gum whenever a craving occurs. Most smokers will go through 10 to 15 pieces of nicotine gum per day.

- **Inhaler:** Nicotine inhalers are available only with a prescription. The nicotine is absorbed into the bloodstream through the mouth and is not delivered to the lungs.
- **Nasal spray:** Nicotine nasal sprays are available with a prescription from your physician. The spray can be used when a nicotine craving occurs.

Before using any of these products, you should consult with your physician to ensure that the method you choose is appropriate for your needs.

Dealing with Withdrawal

Most smokers experience physical and psychological symptoms of withdrawal when attempting to quit. These symptoms will vary with each individual and may include feelings of sleepiness, excitement, nervousness, irritability or cravings for certain foods. Use the following tips to help combat these symptoms:

- **Avoid alcohol:** Since alcohol and cigarettes tend to go together, avoiding alcohol may help to reduce the urge to smoke. Also avoiding bars and other areas where you may be more tempted to smoke can be helpful.
- **Exercise:** Many people experience higher stress levels when they stop smoking, and exercise can be a great way to help combat this stress. Try going for a walk each time you crave a cigarette, and consider asking a friend or family member to walk with you. Both of you will feel better, and it may help strengthen your relationship.
- **Remind yourself:** You may need to remind yourself daily of your reasons for quitting. Make a list of these reasons that you can keep with you, and glance at this list whenever you have the urge to smoke.

Support Groups

Many organizations provide support groups and resources for smokers trying to quit. To find a support group near you, contact:

- Nicotine Anonymous at www.nicotine-anonymous.org or (877) 879-6422.
- American Cancer Society at www.cancer.org or (800) ACS-2345.
- American Lung Association at www.lung.org or (800) LUNG-USA.

Finally, remember that the decision to quit is a challenging one to make -- you should praise yourself for taking this important first step. Also remember that many smokers attempt to quit numerous times, so do not beat yourself up if you cannot do it this time. Keep a positive attitude and keep trying, and you eventually will make the transition to a smoke-free life.

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-LINK

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME