

# Health Plans



## How to quit smoking

Quitting is hard, but we promise it's worth it. Every cigarette you smoke shortens your life by 11 minutes and increases your risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and emphysema, according to the [National Institutes of Health](#). If you are a smoker, quitting is the best thing you can do for your health.

Here's a breakdown of what happens once you quit, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#):

- After 24 hours – Oxygen levels in your blood return to normal and your chance of a heart attack is reduced.
- After 1-9 months – Circulation, smell, taste and lung function improve. You have more energy and catch fewer colds.
- After 1 year – Your risk of stroke is half that of a smoker.
- After 5 years – Your risk of stroke drops significantly.
- After 10 years – Your risk of getting lung cancer is half what it would be if you were still smoking.

### Make the decision to quit.

Everyone can recommend that you quit smoking, but you must make the decision for yourself. Check out [Smokefree.gov](#) for some self-management tools you can access if you are interested in quitting. Experts suggest finding your most powerful reasons for quitting. Are you worried about chronic lung problems? Are you concerned with the amount of money you're spending on cigarettes? Think about the important reasons why you should quit and write them down.

## How to quit.

- Recognize and record your smoking habits and triggers. Do you always smoke with your coffee, when you're bored, or after a meal? Take note of your habits.
- Recognize that you'll have to find new ways to relieve stress or engage in social situations.
- Build new relationships and routines that don't involve tobacco. For example, if you smoke with your morning coffee, try enjoying your coffee in a different location or join your coworkers for a cup.
- Clear tobacco products from your car, home and office.
- Set a target quit date within the month.
- Talk to your pharmacist for advice on quitting and recommendations on smoking cessation aids. These aids greatly improve your chances of successfully quitting.
- In the process of quitting, reward yourself for taking this important step. Treat yourself to a massage, a new outfit, or donate money to your favorite charity.

## Cope with cravings.

As your body adjusts to life without nicotine, you will experience cravings. In order to fully quit, you'll have to learn how to cope with cravings and move beyond them. You may still crave cigarettes even a week or two after quitting smoking.

This is the hardest withdrawal symptom to deal with because it can be triggered by reminders of smoking. Just remember that once you get through the first week or two, you're almost there.

Try these coping mechanisms to move past your cravings.

- Do something with your hands such as a crossword puzzle or handwashing.
- Pick up a new activity like an exercise routine.
- Brush your teeth and use mouthwash.
- Try oral substitutes like sugarless gum.

- Take a few deep breaths and wait for the cravings to subside.

Nicotine is very addictive so quitting smoking can be hard at first. Yet the body will adjust and be much healthier in the future. There are several tools to help you get past the initial challenges of quitting.

## Smoking cessation aids.

Taking medication to help you quit greatly increase your chances of kicking the habit for good.

- Nicotine replacement therapy – Nicotine lozenges, gum, patch, nasal sprays and inhalers contain nicotine, which helps replace the nicotine found in cigarettes. Using these helps you wean off nicotine and ease your withdrawal symptoms. You'll need a prescription for nasal sprays and inhalers, but you can buy lozenges and gum over-the-counter.
- Oral smoking cessation medications. These can help you with withdrawal symptoms or with reducing nicotine cravings. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about these medications.
- Talk to a pharmacist. A medical professional can help in picking a quitting aid. [This guide](#) shows some of the options for quitting aids.

## Take steps towards quitting.

Here are some resources to help you quit smoking.

- Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW. This toll-free quit line will connect you with a trained counselor who can provide information, advice, referrals and support.
- Sign up to receive texts from [SmokefreeTXT](#). This free service offers encouragement, advice and tips via texts to help quit.