

Smoking Cessation

Smoking is harmful for health and can cause diseases like high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, vascular problems, lung and bladder cancer among others.

Quitting is hard

Quitting is hard. If you have tried to quit smoking in the past, you know how challenging it can be. For some people, nicotine can be as addictive as drugs like heroin or cocaine. Usually, individuals have to try two to three times or more before they can finally quit.

What are the benefits of quitting smoking?

Quitting smoking can significantly improve your health and can also help you live longer. It lowers risk of heart disease, lung disease, kidney failure, cancer, infection, bone disease, and stomach problems. Quitting will improve your health no matter how old you are, even if you have smoked for a long time.

What should I do if I want to quit smoking?

Speak with your healthcare provider. Although it is possible to quit on your own, getting help greatly increases your chances of quitting successfully. When you are ready to quit, follow these steps:

1. Set a quit date.
2. Tell your family and friends that you plan to quit.
3. Plan ahead for the challenges you will face, such as cigarette cravings. Your doctor can provide you with nicotine replacement products like patches, gum and lozenges to help you with your cravings
4. Remove cigarettes from your home, car, and workplace.
5. No more smoking on the quit date. Start using a combination of patches and gum or lozenges as instructed by your physician.

How does medication help with quitting?

Nicotine is the main addictive ingredient in cigarettes. Different forms of nicotine replacement are available, including skin patches, lozenges, gum, nasal sprays, and inhalers. Most of these are available over the counter, and health insurance might cover some or all of the cost. Using two forms of nicotine replacement, such as wearing a patch while using gum or lozenges, can be effective when you experience cravings to smoke.

What are the symptoms of withdrawal?

When you stop smoking, you may have symptoms such as:

- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling irritable, anxious, or restless
- Getting frustrated or angry
- Having trouble thinking clearly.
- You might gain a few pounds. You can prevent gaining weight by staying active and eating a healthy diet.

These symptoms, also called withdrawal symptoms, can be difficult to deal with, which is why it can be so hard to quit. Some people who stop smoking become temporarily depressed and may need treatment for depression, such as counseling, medication or both. People with depression might:

- No longer enjoy or care about doing the things they used to like to do
- Feel sad, down, hopeless, nervous, or cranky
- Lose or gain weight
- Sleep too much or too little
- Feel tired
- Feel guilty
- Forget things or feel confused
- Move and speak more slowly than usual
- Act restless or have trouble staying still
- Think about death or suicide

How does counseling work?

For most people who are trying to quit smoking, it works best to use both medication and counseling. Your doctor or nurse can also help you find a counselor to talk to. A counselor can help you find:

- What triggers you to want to smoke, and how to handle these situations
- How to resist cravings
- What you can do differently if you have tried to quit before

You can meet with a counselor in one-on-one sessions or as part of a group. They are available to help over the phone, through text messaging, or online. Dial **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or **1-800-784-8669** or go online to www.smokefree.gov.

What to do if you are feeling depressed?

If you think you might be depressed, tell your primary care physician or psychiatrist right away. If you ever feel like hurting yourself, immediate help is available. In the US, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis helpline:

- To speak to someone, **call or text 988**.
- To talk to someone online, go to www.988lifeline.org/chat.
- Call for an ambulance (in the US and Canada, **call 9-1-1**).
- Go to the emergency department at your local hospital.