

Five Keys to Quitting

Step One: Get ready

Set a specific day to quit smoking.

Create your own smoke free environment.

- Get rid of ALL cigarettes and ashtrays in your home, car and place of work.
- Don't let people smoke in your home.
- Review your past attempts to quit. Think about what worked and what did not.
- Once you quit, don't smoke - NOT EVEN A PUFF!

Step Two: Get support and encouragement

Studies have shown that you have a better chance of being successful if you have help. You can get support in many ways:

- Tell your family, friends, and co-workers that you are going to quit and want their support. Ask them not to smoke around you or leave cigarettes out.
- Talk to your health care provider (for example, doctor, dentist, nurse, pharmacist, psychologist or smoking counselor.)
- Get individual, group or telephone counseling. The more counseling you have, the better your chances are of quitting. Programs are given at local hospitals and health centers.

Step Three: Learn new skills and behaviors

- Try to distract yourself from urges to smoke. Talk to someone, go for a walk or get busy with a task.
- When you first try to quit, change your routine. Use a different route to work.

- Drink tea instead of coffee. Eat breakfast in a different place.
- Do something to reduce your stress. Take a hot bath, exercise or read a book.
- Plan something enjoyable to do everyday.
- Drink a lot of water and other fluids.

Step Four: Get medication and use it correctly

Medications can help you stop smoking and lessen the urge to smoke. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved five medications that reduce nicotine cravings to help you quit smoking:

- Bupropion SR which is available by prescription.
- Nicotine gum which is available over the counter.
- Nicotine inhaler which is available by prescription.
- Nicotine nasal spray which is available by prescription.
- Nicotine patch which is available by prescription and over the counter.

Ask your health care provider for advice and carefully read and follow the information on the package. All of these medications will more or less double your chances of quitting for good, but it still takes a lot of willpower. Everyone who is trying to quit may benefit from using a medication. If you are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, nursing, under 18, smoking less than 10 cigarettes per day or have a medical condition, talk to your doctor or other health care provider before taking medications.

Step Five: Be prepared for a relapse or difficult situations

Most relapses occur within the first three months after quitting. Don't be discouraged if you start smoking again. Remember, most people try several times before they finally quit. Here are some difficult situations to watch for:

- Alcohol. Avoid drinking alcohol. Drinking lowers your chances of success.

- Other Smokers. Being around people who are smoking can make you want to smoke.

- Weight Gain. Many smokers will gain weight when they quit, usually less than ten pounds. Eat a healthy diet and stay active. Don't let weight gain distract you from your main goal - quitting smoking. Some quit smoking medications may help delay weight gain.

- Bad Mood or Depression. There are a lot of ways to improve your mood other than smoking.

If you are having problems with any of these situations, talk to your doctor or other health care provider.