

Tobacco Cessation

HOW TO QUIT FOR GOOD



Quitting tobacco is one of the best things you can do for your health. Lifestyle choices, such as tobacco use, diet and exercise are the biggest influences when it comes to a person's quality of life. Though we can't always control our environment, the type of health care we have or our genetics, we can control whether or not we use tobacco, what we eat and how much we move.

Most people know tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke causes lung cancer. But there are many other health consequences as well. These include:

- Increased risk of many types of cancer
- More frequent colds and chronic bronchitis
- Emphysema
- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Heart disease
- Tooth decay

Smoking also causes:

- Bad breath
- Discolored teeth and fingernails
- Decreased sense of taste and smell
- Premature wrinkling of the skin
- Shortness of breath
- Financial burden

Did you know?

Tobacco causes one out of every five deaths in the United States. (National Cancer Institute).

Question: Why is tobacco so hard to quit?

Answer: Habit and addiction

Habit: A behavior pattern acquired by frequent repetition.

Addiction: A physical need or dependency on nicotine, the primary agent in tobacco.

Within 10 seconds, the nicotine found in cigarettes moves from the lungs into the bloodstream and, finally, into the smoker's brain. This triggers the release of the neurotransmitter "dopamine." Dopamine is responsible for feelings of pleasure and well-being. Some of the pleasurable effects associated with tobacco use include heightened awareness, increased short-term memory, reduced anxiety, decreased appetite and an increased tolerance to pain. Within minutes, the acute effects of nicotine wear off. So people must continue "smoking" or "chewing" to maintain its pleasurable effects and to prevent withdrawal.

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THE BENEFITS OF LIVING TOBACCO-FREE

20 minutes

Blood pressure drops to a level close to that before the last cigarette, and the temperature of hands and feet increases to normal.

8 hours

The carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal and the oxygen level in the blood increases to normal.

48 hours

Nerve endings start to regrow and the ability to smell and taste is enhanced.

2 weeks – 3 months

Circulation improves and lung function increases by 30%. Coughing may also lessen, as does sinus congestion, fatigue and shortness of breath.

1 year

Risk of coronary heart disease is half of that of a smoker.

5 years

Stroke risk is reduced.

10 Years

Lung cancer death is about half that of a continuing smoker and risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreas decreases.

15 Years

Risk of coronary heart disease is that of a nonsmoker.

The harmful effects of secondhand smoke

Secondhand smoke is classified as a Group A cancer-causing agent. This means that because no level of smoke is known to be safe, federal agencies recommend reducing secondhand smoke exposure to the lowest possible level.

Secondhand smoke sticks around long after a cigarette has been finished; up to two and a half hours. The fabrics in your car and home trap its harmful chemicals as well. And fanning smoke away doesn't help because 85% of smoke is invisible.

Making the decision to quit

Behavior change is rarely a single event. During the past 10 years, we've come to understand it as a process of stages people pass through. Living tobacco-free requires you to make a major lifestyle change.

Be forewarned: there is nothing simple about tobacco or quitting. Tobacco is not a single product or chemical. While nicotine is the most powerful addictive substance in tobacco, there are many more; 599 substances total. Among them are acetone (a solvent), pyrene (used in dyes and pesticides) vinyl chloride (used in plastic materials), polonium 210 (a radioactive element), and DDT (an insecticide). Some of these additives enhance the experience of tobacco use. Others allow the cigarette to burn back evenly. So, failure has been built into the addiction model.

Source: Cigna. *A Healthier Point of View Living Tobacco Free*. 2010.

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Quit plan

Step 1 – Determine how you will quit

Step 2 – Choose your quit date

Step 3 – Make plans to deal with triggers

Step 4 – Build your support system

Step 5 – Begin to take steps toward quitting

Step 6 – Celebrate your milestones and successes

Resources to help you quit

Community resources

- Nicotine Anonymous: nicotine-anonymous.org

Websites

- American Cancer Society: cancer.org
- American Lung Association: lungusa.org
- Smokefree.gov: smokefree.gov

