

How to Quit Smoking

(Adapted from UpToDate)

Why should I stop smoking?

Smoking is a major cause of death and contributes to multiple ailments, including cancers, lung disease, heart disease, osteoporosis, skin wrinkling, stomach ulcers, erectile dysfunction, and complications during pregnancy. Every year in the United States, more than 400,000 deaths occur from cigarette smoking, and an estimated 40,000 deaths are due to second-hand smoking.



Is it too late to stop smoking?

The earlier you quit, the greater the positive impact on your health, even if you smoked heavily or for many years. For example, people who quit smoking before the age of 50 lower their risk of dying over the next 15 years by half.

What are the withdrawal effects?

You may experience any of the following when you first stop:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Irritability, anger, of frustration
- Anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating
- Restlessness
- Cravings
- Depression
- Weight gain

How do I prepare to quit?

- Set a quit date within the next 2 weeks.
 - You may consider decreasing the number of cigarettes you smoke before your intended quit date.
- Tell your friends and family about your date so they can provide support.
- Talk to your healthcare provider about prescription medications that can help you quit and nicotine replacements (gums, patches, lozenges, etc.).
- Avoid activities that are associated with your prior tobacco use; for example, avoid alcohol and caffeine, hanging around other smokers, and stress.
- Establish an exercise program and maintain a healthy diet.

What else can I do to help me quit?

- Relapses are common. Most smokers make several attempts to stop smoking before they stop completely. If relapse occurs, understand what happened so you will be prepared for your next attempt or make any changes to help you stop.
- Even though cravings can be severe, they will diminish over time. Withdrawal symptoms will diminish significantly after a few weeks.
- Do not allow yourself to cheat, thinking “one cigarette won’t hurt”. One usually leads to more.
- Always have a hotline phone number you can call (such as 1-800-NO-BUTTS (1-800-662-8887)).
- Consider group counseling.
- Alternative therapies such as acupuncture and hypnosis may also help.