



# Quitting smoking

**When you decide to quit, the benefits start immediately.**

**Within two hours** the nicotine is out of your system. The by-products may take a few days to leave your body.

**Within six hours** your heart beat slows to normal and your blood pressure goes down.

**Within 24 hours** the carbon monoxide is out of your system and your lungs work more efficiently.

**Within two days** your taste buds come alive and your sense of smell returns.

**Within weeks** the phlegm that has built up in your lungs starts to loosen and you cough it up.

**Within two months** the blood flow improves to your hands and feet.

**After 12 months** your risk of sudden death from heart attack is almost half that of smokers.

**After five years** that risk is almost the same as for non-smokers.

**When you quit smoking you lose your:**

- bad breath, stained teeth, yellow fingers, smelly hair and clothes
- wheezing chest, shortness of breath and hand tremor
- the risk of heart disease and early sudden death
- higher risk of emphysema (rotting lungs) and lung cancer.

**When you quit smoking you gain:**

- clear skin, improved sense of taste and smell
- cleaner teeth, lungs, blood supply and breath
- increased blood supply to your hands and feet – decreasing your chances of gangrene
- more money to spend.

**Preparing to quit**

Some people find quitting easy, others find it difficult. The key to success is making up your mind to stop. Many people who've quit successfully asked friends and family for support.

Before you quit it helps to think about times when you smoke and change your habits.

For example:

- if you smoke when talking on the phone have a glass of water nearby
- if you smoke when drinking alcohol, stop drinking for a while, eat nibbles or fiddle with something, such as a couple of pebbles
- avoid situations where you will be tempted to smoke.

Be prepared for withdrawal symptoms, which are usually gone after 15 days. Withdrawal symptoms mean your body is flushing out the chemicals.

Effects include:

- dizziness, light-headedness and headaches
- tingling sensations
- upset digestion
- different sleeping patterns
- coughing.

**Quitting and staying a non-smoker**

There are many different ways to quit. You could go 'cold turkey', use nicotine replacement therapy, call the Quitline (0800 778 778) or cut down gradually over a couple of weeks.

Whichever way you choose, set a date and stick to it. Start thinking of yourself as a non-smoker. Practise saying, "No thank-you, I don't smoke". And remember to reward yourself often. Work out how much money you'll save and use the money to buy something you want.

**If you feel like a cigarette, remember the four Ds:**

**Delay** – the craving will soon pass

**Deep breathing** – as good as a drawback, only safer

**Drink water** – sip it slowly or use a straw

**Do something else** – like go for a walk, listen to music or ring a friend.

Try some new ways to deal with stress, such as deep breathing, massage, meditation or more exercise. For immediate relief try this exercise as soon as you feel an increase in stress:

- imagine yourself smiling
- say to yourself, ‘alert mind, calm body’
- as you breathe out, relax your muscles, from your face down to your toes.

De-stress by:

- tuning into your physical surroundings
- sit down comfortably and without talking, begin by concentrating on how your body and skin feel against your seat
- listen and focus on all the different sounds happening around you
- finally look around and focus on all the colour you see in your environment

Weight control is an issue for some quitters and not for others. Have a glass of cold water or a vegetable snack when you feel like extra snacking. If you do put on weight you will probably return to normal in a couple of months. Putting on weight for a while is not nearly as harmful as smoking. If you’ve beaten smoking, you can tackle your weight gain! If you do have a cigarette, it’s a setback, not a defeat. Keep going with your quit attempt. If you go back to regular smoking, don’t despair. Many successful quitters have taken several attempts. Work out what went wrong and try again.

**For advice on quitting, phone the Quitline 0800 778 778**

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