

## Got Asthma? Quit Smoking

### Why should I quit smoking?

You've probably heard how smoking can be harmful to your health and the health of those around you. Here are some ways quitting can be helpful. If you quit, you will:

- Likely prolong your life.
- Improve your health. Smoking increases your risk of lung cancer, throat cancer, a lung disease called emphysema, heart disease, high blood pressure, ulcers, gum disease, and makes asthma worse.
- Feel healthier. Smoking can cause coughing, poor athletic ability, and sore throats.
- Look better. Smoking can cause face wrinkles, stained teeth, and dull skin.
- Improve your sense of taste and smell.
- Save money.

### How can I quit smoking?

There's no single way to quit smoking that works for everyone. A smoking cessation program may be helpful to you. Ask your doctor about smoking cessation programs in your community.

Before you quit all at once ("cold turkey"), setting a plan will help:

- Pick a date to stop smoking, and then prepare for it.
- Record when and why you smoke. You will come to know what triggers you to smoke.
- Record what you do when you smoke. Try smoking at different times and different places to break the connections between smoking and certain activities.
- List your reasons for quitting. Read over the list before and after you quit.
- Find activities to replace smoking. Be ready to do something else when you want to smoke.
- Ask your doctor about using nicotine gum and patches. Some people find these aids are very helpful. Also ask your doctor about a nicotine-free prescription medication, like Zyban, that can help you quit smoking.

### Quitting Time: Day One

On the day you pick to quit, start that morning without a cigarette. Then follow these helpful tips:

- Don't focus on what you are missing. Think about what you are gaining.
- Tell yourself you are a great person for quitting. Remind yourself of this when you want a smoke.
- When you get the urge to smoke, take a deep breath. Hold it for 10 seconds and then release it slowly.
- Keep your hands busy. Doodle, play a sport, knit, or work on a computer.
- Change activities that were connected to smoking. Take a walk or read a book instead of taking a cigarette break.
- Don't carry a lighter, matches, or cigarettes.
- Go to places that don't allow smoking, such as museums and libraries.

- Eat low-calorie, healthful foods when the urge to smoke strikes. Carrot and celery sticks, fresh fruits, and fat-free snacks are good choices.
- Drink a lot of fluids. Cut down on alcohol and caffeine. They can make you want to smoke. Select water, herbal teas, caffeine-free soft drinks, and juices.
- Exercise. Exercising will help you relax.
- Hang out with non-smokers.
- Seek support for quitting. Tell others about your milestones with pride.

### **How will I feel after I quit smoking?**

After 20 minutes of not smoking:

- Your blood pressure and pulse decrease
- The temperature of your hands and feet increases

After 8 hours of not smoking:

- The carbon monoxide level in your blood returns to normal
- Oxygen levels in your blood increase

After 24 hours of not smoking:

- Your chance of heart attack decreases

After 48 hours of not smoking:

- Your nerve endings adjust to the absence of nicotine
- Your ability to taste and smell begins to return

After 72 hours of not smoking:

- Bronchial tubes relax

After 2 weeks to 3 months of not smoking:

- Your circulation improves
- Your exercise tolerance improves

After 1-9 months of not smoking:

- Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath decrease
- Cilia in the lungs regrow, increasing the ability of the lungs to handle mucus, clean the lungs, and reduce infection
- Your overall energy level increases

After 1 year of not smoking:

- Your risk of dying from heart disease decreases to half that of a lifelong smoker's risk

After 5 years of not smoking:

- Your risk of dying from lung cancer decreases to half that of a lifelong smoker's risk

After 10 years of not smoking

- Your risk of dying from lung cancer drops to almost the same rate as a lifelong NON-smoker
- Your risk of other cancers, such as cancer of the mouth, larynx, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas decreases

### **How will I feel when I quit smoking?**

When you first quit smoking, you may go through withdrawal and:

- Crave cigarettes.
- Feel very hungry.
- Cough often.
- Get headaches.
- Have difficulty concentrating.
- Have constipation.
- Feel very tired.
- Have a sore throat.
- Have difficulty sleeping.

Although withdrawal symptoms will be the strongest when you first quit, they should go away within a few weeks.

### **I have tried to quit smoking before and failed. I don't think I can do it.**

To quit smoking, you must be ready emotionally and mentally. It may take several tries before you are successful. Some people are more ready to quit than others. Look at these five stages of change that people go through to successfully quit smoking.

- Stage One: Pre-contemplation. You don't want to quit smoking, but you may try to quit because you feel pressured to quit.
- Stage Two: Contemplation. You want to quit someday. You haven't taken steps to quit, but you want to quit.
- Stage Three: Preparation. You take small steps to quit such as cutting back on smoking or switching to a lighter brand.
- Stage Four: Action. You commit to quitting. You make changes in your actions and environment to help cope with urges to smoke and remain smoke-free for six months.
- Stage Five: Maintenance. You have not smoked for one year.

Remember: Smoking again (relapse) is common. In fact, 75% of those who quit will smoke again. Most smokers try to quit three times before being successful. Don't give up!

Reviewed by the doctors at The Cleveland Clinic Department of Allergy and Immunology.

Edited by Charlotte E. Grayson, MD, June 2003.

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