

## **Quit Smoking: Your Guide to Kicking the Habit From WebMD Health with The Cleveland Clinic**

**Q**

**What should I do first?**

**A**

Pick a date to stop smoking and then stick to it.

Write down your reasons for quitting. Read over the list every day, before and after you quit.

Here are some tips to think about.

- \* Write down when you smoke, why you smoke and what you are doing when you smoke. You will learn what triggers you to smoke.
- \* Stop smoking in certain situations (such as during your work break or after dinner) before actually quitting.
- \* Make a list of activities you can do instead of smoking. Be ready to do something else when you want to smoke.
- \* Ask your doctor about using nicotine gum or patches. Some people find these aids helpful.
- \* Join a smoking cessation support group or program. Call your local chapter of the American Lung Association.

**Q**

**How can I avoid relapsing?**

**A**

- \* Don't carry a lighter, matches or cigarettes. Keep all of these smoking reminders out of sight.
- \* If you live with a smoker, ask that person not to smoke in your presence.
- \* Don't focus on what you are missing. Think about the healthier way of life you are gaining.
- \* When you get the urge to smoke, take a deep breath. Hold it for 10 seconds and release it slowly. Repeat this several times until the urge to smoke is gone.
- \* Keep your hands busy. Doodle, play with a pencil or straw, 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.
- \* When you can, avoid places, people and situations associated with smoking. Hang out with non-smokers or go to places that don't allow smoking, such as the movies, museums, shops or libraries.
- \* Don't substitute food or sugar-based products for cigarettes. Eat low-calorie, healthful foods (such as carrot or celery sticks, sugar-free hard candies) or chew gum when the urge to smoke strikes so you can avoid weight gain.
- \* Exercise. Exercising will help you relax.
- \* Get support for quitting. Tell others about your milestones with pride.
- \* Work with your doctor to develop a plan using over-the-counter or prescription nicotine-replacement aids.

**Q**

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

**A**

You may crave cigarettes, be irritable, feel very hungry, cough often, get headaches or have

difficulty concentrating. These symptoms of withdrawal occur because your body is used to nicotine, the active addicting agent within cigarettes.

When withdrawal symptoms occur within the first two weeks after quitting, stay in control. Think about your reasons for quitting. Remind yourself that these are signs that your body is healing and getting used to being without cigarettes.

The withdrawal symptoms are only temporary. They are strongest when you first quit but will go away within 10 to 14 days. Remember that withdrawal symptoms are easier to treat than the major diseases that smoking can cause.

You may still have the desire to smoke, since there are many strong associations with smoking. People may associate smoking with specific situations, with a variety of emotions or with certain people in their lives. The best way to overcome these associations is to experience them without smoking.

If you relapse do not lose hope. Seventy-five percent of those who quit smoke again. Most smokers quit three times before they are successful. If you relapse, don't give up! Plan ahead and think about what you will do next time you get the urge to smoke.

Reviewed by the doctors at the The Cleveland Clinic Heart Center.

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