

Quitting smoking



Why you should quit smoking

Quitting cigarettes is not easy. Sometimes it takes a lot of tries before you can quit, but every quit attempt is one step closer to being able to stop smoking forever.

There are many health, financial and social benefits to stopping smoking. If you have a partner or family who rely on you, and you try to stop smoking, you are doing it for them as well.

Health benefits of stopping smoking

These include a decreased risk of lung cancer, heart attack and stroke.

If you stop smoking:

- within 20 minutes your blood pressure, heart rate and temperature return to normal
- within 8 hours the oxygen in your blood rises to a normal level
- within 24 hours your chances of a heart attack reduce
- within 3 days your breathing is easier

The positive effects of stopping smoking begin within hours or days. After a few years of not smoking, some of the serious heart risks return to the level of those of someone who has never smoked. It is beneficial to stop smoking at any age. If you are pregnant, it is vital for your baby's health that you stop smoking.

Smokers who do not stop smoking have a one in two chance of dying of a smoking related illness – most commonly lung cancer, emphysema, heart disease and stroke. Smoking also damages the health of those around you, your fertility and the unborn child if a pregnant woman inhales smoke.

Nicotine is addictive

If you smoke cigarettes you will more than likely become addicted to nicotine but it is the other components of cigarette smoke that damage your health.

Nicotine activates an important group of nerve and brain receptors, producing many effects. Smokers say smoking gives them stress relief, improved mood and the ability to think or concentrate better, and because nicotine is rapidly absorbed from cigarette smoke, it gives instant effects.

For regular daily smokers, the downside is that without nicotine the opposite sensations (withdrawal effects) are experienced. These can start a few hours after the last cigarette and include:

- cravings for a cigarette
- feeling irritable, anxious or depressed
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty sleeping
- a temporary increase in appetite
- a temporary weight gain

If you have cravings, remember the 4 D's:

Delay – decide to take a few minutes before acting on the urge to smoke

Deep breath – inhale slowly and exhale slowly three times

Drink water – sip it slowly and focus on how it feels

Distract yourself – go for a walk, talk to a friend or make a cup of tea

Why some people start smoking again

Reasons people give for starting smoking again include:

- being unable to cope with cravings for nicotine
- thinking it would be okay just to have one
- having no support from friends, family and those who still smoke
- being unable to 'say no' in social environments, such as in the pub
- trying to quit 'cold turkey', ie, without stop smoking aids and some sort of support.

Being aware of these reasons can help you prepare for your quit attempt. Make a plan as to how you would cope with each of these situations so you are less likely to be tempted to smoke at difficult times. Having one cigarette



Taking Champix for 12 weeks increases the chances of quitting* by over 3.5 times compared to placebo (sugar pill).¹

Ask your doctor if Champix is right for you. To find out more, go to www.champix.co.nz

CHAMPIX
varenicline tartrate

Patient information – Quitting smoking



does not have to mean you've relapsed back into smoking. If you recognise how it happened and renew your effort, you can learn how to avoid the situation again.

If you do start smoking again, do not be discouraged. Think of it as one less quit attempt to make before you give up for good. Each time you try to quit you'll learn a bit more about how to succeed. Be determined more than ever to get the health benefits of quitting by stopping completely.

How can your doctor help

When trying to quit, ask your doctor if you can set up a line of support with the practice or, alternatively, contact Quitline (0800 778 778). The Quitline website (www.quit.org.nz) has lots of useful advice about quitting and how to access support and nicotine replacement therapy.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) supplies nicotine in a controlled way that helps smokers not to smoke. The nicotine skin patch is designed to deliver a background level of nicotine. Nicotine gum and lozenges deliver nicotine more quickly and can be used when you get a sudden urge for a cigarette.

Nicotine patches, gum and lozenges are subsidised by the Government. With a Quitcard a four week supply costs around \$5. A Quitcard needs to be obtained from your doctor, Quitline, a Quitcard provider (a range of people who can write a script for nicotine products) including GPs, practice nurses, and pharmacists, or another stop smoking service.

NRT should be taken for at least 8 weeks but people who need it for longer should continue to use it. Using two NRT products is more effective than using one. If a person is not ready to stop smoking straight away, NRT can be used to help reduce their smoking before they stop. NRT is safe to use in pregnancy and is recommended to prevent harm to the unborn baby from smoking.

Prescribed Stop Smoking Medications

Other non-nicotine stop smoking medications, such as bupropion (Zyban), varenicline (Champix) and nortriptyline (Norpress) must be prescribed by your doctor and are fully funded. You will only have to pay for the visit to the doctor rather than the medication. These medications work in one or both of the following ways:

- by reducing the negative sensations of nicotine withdrawal – so you do not miss having a cigarette so badly; or
- by blocking the pleasant sensations of smoking – so having a cigarette is less enjoyable.

Some tips on quitting

- **Decide how you are going to stop** smoking and select methods that are proven, such as using NRT or prescribed stop smoking medication and getting support from Quitline or your doctor and/or practice nurse
- **List the reasons you want to stop** smoking and put them somewhere you'll see them often, eg, on the fridge, next to your desk at work, by your bed
- **Set a quit date**, tell people you're quitting and ask them to be supportive (and not offer you cigarettes)
- **Decide now what you will do instead** of smoking if you get the urge for a cigarette
- **Avoid people who may encourage you to smoke** – who can you be with instead?
- **Reward yourself with something** using the money you save each week on cigarettes
- **Talk to your doctor or pharmacist** about any problems with or questions on the medications helping you to quit.

For further information and support

Quitline

Provides free online support (www.quit.org.nz), texting and phone support (0800 778 778). Email quit@quit.org.nz or visit their facebook page (www.facebook.com/quitlinenz)

Txt2Quit

Register for the service and get sent texts to motivate you as you quit. To register text QUIT to 4006

Original material provided by The Health Media

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