

SMOKING

BE A NON-SMOKER AND FEEL THE BENEFITS

Quitting smoking is one of the most important steps you can take towards better health and wellness.

Tobacco smoke has both long and short-term health effects. It contains many chemicals that contribute to lung disease, cancer, addiction and raised blood pressure. It also contributes to narrowing of blood vessels which increases the chances of heart attack, stroke or other blood vessel disease. In fact, smokers die from heart disease more commonly than from lung cancer, throat cancer and emphysema.

DECIDING TO QUIT

If you've made the decision to quit, there's a lot you can do to help boost your chances of staying smoke-free.

Set a quit date and then make an action plan. This helps prepare you to handle nicotine cravings or other nicotine withdrawal symptoms as well as helping you cope with 'trigger' situations that might tempt you to smoke.

It's also a good idea to call the Quitline. A trained adviser can give you advice on quitting, information on quit smoking courses and send you a free Quit book with helpful tips and strategies.

As well as getting advice and support to stay motivated, there's the option of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) or medication to help tame the urge to smoke. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about these options to help you battle nicotine cravings.

TIPS TO HELP YOU STAY SMOKE-FREE

There's no question that the urge to smoke is often so strong it's easy to put this knowledge aside and have another cigarette. Here are some more ways to help boost your chances of quitting:

- Write down the reasons you want to quit — use the list to remind you why you decided to stop in the first place. And think about how much you're saving too, and what you can do with that extra money!
- Be prepared with strategies to handle the initial stress of quitting — especially if you're under extra pressure or having a bad day. Decide what works best for you — a relaxation technique, getting some fresh air or doing something calming like listening to music.
- Expect cravings and distract yourself until they pass — you can try drinking water, chewing gum, talking to a friend or just taking a few deep breaths.
- Use positive 'self-talk' — tell yourself 'I can do this' and remind yourself how much healthier you'll feel in a few weeks time'.

- Focus on the positive changes in your body after quitting — within days and weeks of quitting, your energy levels will increase, circulation improves throughout your body and you're likely start to feel that breathing and exercise get easier.
- Get the help and support of friends and family to keep you motivated and on-track.
- For many, smoking and drinking go hand in hand — so take extra care on social drinking occasions. At the start it may help to avoid places — or people — that make it harder for you to resist cigarettes.

DON'T GIVE UP

If you slip up and have one cigarette, it doesn't mean you have to go back to smoking and undo all the progress you've made so far. Keep trying — your body has started to recover and each day without a cigarette is good news for your health.

If you have tried to quit but are still smoking, remember most people take a few goes to quit for good. A relapse isn't a failure — and with each attempt, you are one step closer to quitting for good.

What's important is finding out what you learned from this attempt to quit — what helped you and what worked against you. This information will give you a better chance of staying smoke-free the next time you try.

And once you're ready, set another date for quitting — and try again! No matter how many slip-ups you have and how many tries it takes, don't give up on giving up.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bupa health information
www.bupa.com.au/health

Quitline
www.13quit.org.au

Sources:

Pharmacy Self Care. Staying a non-smoker. Deakin, ACT: Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. 2009.

Quit Victoria. (quit.org.au)

Better Health Channel. Smoking — quitting tips. (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

Mayo Clinic. Action guide to dealing with triggers. (www.mayoclinic.com)

National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre. Tobacco. (ndarc.med.unsw.edu.au/)

Last published: 30 September 2012

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