

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SMOKING CESSATION

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine

Why Should I Quit Smoking?

Smoking cigarettes can lead to many serious health problems, including:

- Cancer
- Asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Type 2 diabetes
- Vision problems (cataracts)
- Gum disease
- Hip fractures
- Pregnancy problems, like miscarriage and birth defects
- Erectile dysfunction
- Death

Is It Too Late to Quit Smoking?

You are never too old, too healthy, or too sick to benefit from quitting. People who stop smoking reduce their risk for disease and early death. The earlier you are able to quit smoking, the greater the benefits. However, there are benefits at any age, especially if you have an illness caused by tobacco use. You may notice some of the following benefits within the first few days and weeks after quitting:

- Less coughing and wheezing
- Lower blood pressure
- Clearer skin
- Healthier teeth and gums

Some benefits happen years after you quit. These benefits include lowered risk for:

- Stroke—Your stroke risk becomes the same as a nonsmoker within 2 to 4 years of quitting.
- Heart disease—Within 2 to 3 years, your risk is similar to a person who has never smoked.
- Lung cancer—Lung cancer risk is cut in half after 10 years of quitting.

Why Is Quitting So Hard?

Quitting smoking can be hard for many reasons. The substance in cigarettes, called nicotine, is very addictive. Smoking and the act of “lighting up” can become a comforting habit. Smoking becomes a routine and gets linked to many of your daily activities. To quit smoking, you will have to make changes to your behavior. You will also need to address your addiction to nicotine.



How Can I Quit?

You are more likely to be successful if you quit with support. Ask your doctor about counseling, support groups, or hotlines that you can call for help in your area. These programs can help you learn more about your habit and how to change your behavior. There are also medicines available to help curb your cravings for nicotine. These medicines include:

- Nicotine replacement therapy—This includes the nicotine gum, patch, lozenge, inhaler, or nose spray. These products usually release lower doses of nicotine in your body than you would usually get from smoking. They help to reduce your cravings and can lessen symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.
- Prescription medicines (bupropion and varenicline)—These are medicines that you take by mouth and can only be obtained with a doctor's prescription. They work in your brain to help reduce nicotine cravings.

Talk with your doctor about which option is best for you.

Questions for My Doctor

- How long will it take for my cravings to go away?
- I've tried to quit before and failed. How can I quit for good?
- Are there local programs to help me quit?
- Which medicine would help me quit smoking?
- How long will I be on the medicine?
- Are there side effects from the medicine?
- Can natural remedies like acupuncture or hypnosis help me quit?
- I'm not ready to quit. Will cutting down on my smoking improve my health?

For More Information



National Institutes of Health

www.smokefree.gov

American Lung Association

www.lung.org/stop-smoking/

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/how_to_quit/