

Frequently Asked Questions about Quitting Smoking

Are you or someone you know trying to quit smoking? If so, the following information may help you. These 10 questions and answers are excerpted from a new consumer brochure by the U.S. Surgeon General.

Question: Why should I quit?

Answer: You will live longer and feel better. Quitting will lower your chances of having a heart attack, stroke, or cancer. The people you live with, especially children, will be healthier. If you are pregnant, you will improve your chances of having a healthy baby. And you will have extra money to spend on things other than cigarettes.

Question: What is the first thing I need to do once I've decided to quit?

Answer: You should set a quit date—the day when you will break free of your tobacco addiction. Then, consider visiting your doctor or other health care provider before the quit date. She or he can help by providing practical advice and information on the medication that is best for you.

Question: What medication would work best for me?

Answer: Different people do better with different methods. You have five choices of medications that are currently approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration:

- A non-nicotine pill (bupropion SR).
- Nicotine gum.
- A nicotine inhaler.
- A nicotine nasal spray.
- Nicotine patch.

The gum and patches are available at your local pharmacy, or you can ask your health care provider to write you a prescription for one of the other medications. The good news is that all five medications have been shown to be effective in helping smokers who are motivated to quit.

Question: How will I feel when I quit smoking? Will I gain weight?

Answer: Many smokers gain weight when they quit, but it is usually less than 10 pounds. Eat a healthy diet, stay active, and try not to let weight gain distract you from your main goal—quitting smoking. Some of the medications to help you quit may help delay weight gain.

Question: Some of my friends and family are smokers. What should I do when I'm with them?

Answer: Tell them that you are quitting, and ask them to assist you in this effort. Specifically, ask them not to smoke or leave cigarettes around you.

Question: What kinds of activities can I do when I feel the urge to smoke?

Answer: Talk with someone, go for a walk, drink water, or get busy with a task. Reduce your stress by taking a hot bath, exercising, or reading a book.

Question: How can I change my daily routine, which includes smoking a cigarette with my breakfast?

Answer: When you first try to quit, change your routine. Eat breakfast in a different place, and drink tea instead of coffee. Take a different route to work.

Question: I like to smoke when I have a drink. Do I have to give up both?

Answer: It's best to avoid drinking alcohol for the first 3 months after quitting because drinking lowers your chances of success at quitting. It helps to drink a lot of water and other nonalcoholic drinks when you are trying to quit.

Question: I've tried to quit before and it didn't work. What can I do?

Answer: Remember that most people have to try to quit at least 2 or 3 times before they are successful. Review your past attempts to quit. Think about what worked—and what didn't—and try to use your most successful strategies again.

Question: What should I do if I need more help?

Answer: Get individual, group, or telephone counseling. The more counseling you get, the better your chances are of quitting for good. Programs are given at local hospitals and health centers. Call your local health department for information about programs in your area. Also, talk with your doctor or other health care provider.

For More Information

To get a free print copy of the consumer brochure, *You Can Quit Smoking*, call any of the following toll-free numbers:

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)
800-358-9295
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
800-CDC-1311
- National Cancer Institute (NCI)
800-4-CANCER

More information on quitting is available online at the Surgeon General's Web site (<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco>).

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