

Quitting Smoking



Why Should I Quit Smoking?

Smoking can lead to many health problems, including:

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



It's Never Too Late to Quit Smoking

If you quit smoking, you can reduce your risk of health problems and early death. The earlier you are able to quit smoking, the more you can look forward to better health. However, quitting smoking at any age will help you, especially if you already have health problems from smoking. You are never too old, too healthy, or too sick to quit smoking. You may notice some changes right away after quitting, including:

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

Your health can continue to improve years after you quit by lowering your risk for major health problems. These include:

- **Stroke:** Your stroke risk is 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. It can become part of things you do everyday, like having a cigarette after a meal or when you wake up. Changing your routine can help you break the habit, and medicines can help you with your addiction.

Smoking Cessation



How Can I Quit?

You are more likely to be successful if you quit with help. Ask your doctor about counseling, support groups, or hotlines that you can call for help. These programs can help you learn more about your habit and how to change your behavior. It can also help to tell your friends and family you're trying to quit, so they can support you. Medicines may help curb your cravings for nicotine and include:

- **Nicotine Replacement Therapy:** This includes nicotine gum, patch, lozenge, inhaler, or nose spray. These products release nicotine in your body that 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. They always come with a doctor's prescription. These medicines 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 to help me quit smoking is right for me?
- How long will I need to 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?



Bottom Line

- Smoking cigarettes can cause serious health problems.
- There are benefits to quitting at any age. It's never too late to quit. Quitting smoking reduces your risk of stroke, heart disease, and lung cancer.
- Ask your doctor about counseling or support groups to help you quit smoking. Nicotine replacement therapy, like the patch or gum, can help control cravings. Some prescription medicines can help too.

For More Information

- **Centers for Disease Control:** https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/
- **Medline Plus:** <https://medlineplus.gov/quittingsmoking.html>

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