

# Your Guide to Quitting Smoking

## THINKING ABOUT QUITTING?

The decision to quit smoking is one that only you can make. Others may want you to quit, but the real commitment must come from you.

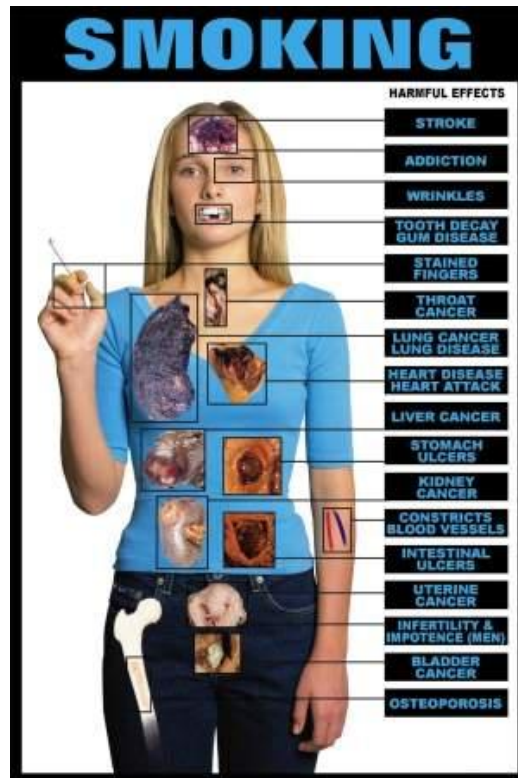
Think through the reasons why you should quit, and keep them at the top of your mind while going through the quitting process:

**1. Health Problems:** Half of lifelong smokers will die of a tobacco-related disease. 90% of lung cancer deaths are caused by tobacco. **That's a hard reality for many, but it doesn't have to include you.**

Smoking ages your skin faster, increases your risk of infections, and amplifies your risk of cancers, heart attacks and strokes. Do you know someone who has had health problems from smoking?

**2. Second hand smoke:** Loved ones exposed to second-hand smoke are just as likely to have cancer, heart attacks, and stroke. Children are more prone to lung and ear infections, as well as frequent, severe asthma attacks. Babies are at greater risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and mental disability.

**3. Cost:** Smoking 1 pack of cigarettes daily would cost \$70 per week, or **\$3,650 per year.**



## MYTHS ABOUT SMOKING

**1. I've smoked for so long - the damage is already done.**

On the contrary, the damage from smoking starts reversing within minutes:

After **20 minutes**, your blood pressure decreases.

After **2 weeks**, your risk of heart attack begins to fall and your lungs work better.

After **one year**, risk of a heart attack or stroke is cut in half.

After **five years**, risks of throat and mouth cancers are cut in half.

After **ten years**, chance of getting lung cancer is down 50%.

After **15 years**, risk of heart disease and stroke is back to the same level as that of a non-smoker.

Ex-smokers live longer than those who continue to smoke. Quitting is the single best thing you can do to improve the quality and length of your life.

**2. Smoking light/filtered/natural cigarettes, or less cigarettes, will cut my risk.**

Unfortunately, data shows that the risk of health problems remains many-fold higher in smokers as compared to non-smokers, regardless of cigarette type or quantity. Smoking a few cigarettes a week can cause a heart attack. **The only fool-proof method is to not smoke at all.**

**3. The weight gain from quitting is just as unhealthy as smoking.**

The average weight gain is 10lbs, which is miniscule compared to the risk of continuing to smoke. You can avoid the weight gain or even lose weight by eating healthily and staying active.

**4. Withdrawal symptoms will last for weeks to months.**

The physical effects of nicotine do not last long. For most people, withdrawal symptoms are mostly gone after a week.

**5. Quitting smoking will cause me to have less energy and be more stressed.**

Quitting smoking actually increases oxygen in the body, and improves circulation (less tired and fewer headaches). There's no pleasure in addiction; research shows that smokers who quit begin eating better, exercising more, and feeling better about themselves.

**6. Quitting will have a negative effect on my sex life.**

Heavy smokers suffer erectile difficulty 60% more than non-smokers. Plus, toxins from cigarette smoke can also cause infertility or genetic defects in your children.

## PREPARING TO QUIT?

Quitting is hard, but can be easier if you have a plan. When you're ready to quit, here are a **few simple steps** you can take to put your plan into action.


**1. SET A QUIT DATE.** Make a pledge to stop on a certain date. Tell your family and friends about it so that they can provide their support.


### 2. CHOOSE A QUIT METHOD.


**Cold Turkey:** Quitting without aids requires a lot of willpower. It works for some people, but unfortunately there is a 95% relapse rate with this method. Medications and support services can improve your chances of quitting for good.


**Quitting Medications** can double your chances of quitting, and are particularly useful if you are more addicted to cigarettes (i.e. smoking  $\geq 20$  cigarettes daily, smoking first thing in the morning, smoking when sick).

**Nicotine replacement products** like gum, patches, inhalers, lozenges are available over-the-counter, and can relieve cravings and withdrawal symptoms. They are much safer than smoking, as they deliver only nicotine and not the 4,000 harmful compounds and carcinogens found in cigarettes. ***B.C. residents can receive up to 12 weeks (84 days in a row) of nicotine replacement products free each year. Speak to your pharmacist to get covered.***

 **Nicotine gum or lozenges** are good for occasional smokers to reduce withdrawal symptoms, cravings and manage stress. **Important:** do not use them like regular gum or lozenges, as doing so can increase side effects. For the lozenge, allow it to dissolve slowly without biting or chewing. For gum, bite once or twice, then "park" it in the corner of your mouth, and repeat every 1min.

 **Nicotine patches** are useful for heavier smokers who need a continuous release of nicotine. The patch is placed once per day. Mild itching, burning and tingling are normal in the first hour of wearing the patch.

 **Nicotine inhalers** are an option for people who miss the hand-to-mouth ritual of smoking. The user sucks on a plastic mouthpiece that contains a replaceable nicotine cartridge. Unlike cigarettes, inhalers don't deliver a 'hit', but they can help with cravings.

 **Nicotine mouth sprays** provide fast relief from cravings. One to two sprays can control cravings in 60 seconds.

**ⓘ Stop the nicotine replacement product and see a doctor if you experience any chest pain, irregular heartbeat, palpitations, leg pain, persistent stomach pain, rash or hives**

**Varenicline** (Champix) and **Bupropion** (Zyban) are prescription drugs that block the effects of nicotine and reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. They make smoking feel less pleasurable, and do not contain nicotine. Because the medications take time to reach an effective level, start taking the medication two weeks before you quit smoking.

#### ⓘ **Varenicline or Bupropion? Things to note:**

- **Varenicline** shouldn't be taken with nicotine replacement products as it increases side effects, and shouldn't be used in pregnant women. Side effects include nausea and vomiting (to reduce this, take varenicline after eating with a full glass of water), gas and constipation, insomnia and abnormal dreams, headache, mood & behavioural changes.
- **Bupropion** can delay weight gain after quitting. Side effects can include dry mouth, insomnia, headache, shakiness or nervousness, weight loss.

To learn more about the various quit medications, visit [www.quitnow.ca/quitting/medications](http://www.quitnow.ca/quitting/medications)

**Support Services:** Counseling increases the odds of success by 60%. **BC's Quitnow program** offers individual and group counseling with a tobacco counselor, education and cessation workshops, and many other resources for free.

Call the **Quitnow.ca program (1-877-455-2233)** or **Smoker's Helpline (1-877-513-5333)** to access a Quit Coach.



CONNECT TO QUIT  
[smokershelpline.ca](http://smokershelpline.ca)  
1 877 513-5333

**Alternative Therapies:** while alternative therapies like acupuncture, hypnosis and herbal medicines have not been proven as successful quit methods, some people find alternative therapies work for them.

**? E-cigarettes:** Electronic cigarettes deliver nicotine by vaporizing a solution of nicotine, propylene glycol (an irritant), and other chemicals. Their sale in Canada is currently unapproved and unregulated.

Due to their delivery mode and lack of regulation, a 2014 World Health Organization report found that some brands carry health risks of nicotine poisoning, and toxic compounds like formaldehyde and acrolein.



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### 3. KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS.

People who smoke develop powerful psychological and emotional attachments to cigarettes, and associate smoking with certain situations and feelings. **By knowing your triggers for smoking, you can find ways to avoid them:**

- **Alcohol:** if you smoke while drinking, alcohol is best avoided for the first few days until the intense cravings pass. **TRY:** drinking less, drinking a different (preferably non-alcoholic) beverage than you did when smoking, and drinking with non-smoking friends.
- **Coffee:** practice taking your coffee break without a smoke, even before you actually quit. Keep your hands busy with the measures on the right ►►
- **Meals:** If you smoke after meals, change your routine. Go for a walk, have an after dinner candy instead of a cigarette, or brush your teeth.
- **Social gatherings / being around smokers:** Spend time with non-smoking and supportive friends early in your quit, especially in the first few weeks. Let all your friends know you're quitting and ask them to support you by not smoking around you. You don't have to cut loose your smoking friends, but you can take a temporary break so you are not tempted.
- **Stressful situations:** Finding new, healthy ways of coping is absolutely essential to long-term success. Think about what situations are stressful for you, and plan for how you will deal with them.
- **Starting the day:** If you need a morning smoke, it will be important to establish a new morning routine: e.g. drinking two glasses of water when you wake up, or a jog or other activity first thing in the morning to keep busy and distracted.
- **Breaks:** If you usually step outside to smoke a cigarette during a break at work, stay inside instead. Do a few simple exercises such as deep knee bends or stretches. Spend some time with coworkers that you don't smoke with.
- **Feeling bored:** Plan more activities to keep busy, like a new exercise class. Bring something to do when you need to wait, like a book or game on your phone.
- **Watching TV:** Sit in a different chair or watch in a different room. Keep your hands busy with the measures on the right ►►
- **Driving:** Before you quit, practice driving short distances without smoking. Remove all cigarettes, ashtrays, and lighters from the car. Get it cleaned or give it a good cleaning yourself. If you share a vehicle, ask if it can be smoke-free.

### 12 Ways to Keep Yourself Distracted During Cravings



- **Going for walks:** try changing things up. Explore a new area or visit places you don't normally go. Try going for a walk with a non-smoking friend.
- **Vacations:** try travelling with other non-smokers or encourage your travel partners to quit with you. Don't pack a lighter and plan a fun activity near the end of the trip to reward yourself for staying quit.

### 4. CONTROL YOUR ENVIRONMENT.

**Remove all reminders of smoking** from your environment. This includes:

- Getting rid of cigarettes, ashtrays and lighters
- Removing smoke odors from your house, workplace and car by scrubbing with warm water and vinegar or baking soda,
- Washing or dry-cleaning clothes and jackets to remove smoke odors.

**Stock up on supplies** to help you quit – healthy snacks, sugarless gum, and medications if you're planning to take them.

### 5. BUILD YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT

Besides friends and family, consider a quit buddy, or get connected on forums and Facebook. Quitting can be easier when you're not doing it alone.

## MANAGING WITHDRAWALS

Withdrawal is your body's response to not having nicotine in its system. Understanding **what to expect during withdrawal** can help you **prepare and manage** your withdrawal symptoms better:

- **Cravings** are often strongest in the first few days, but each episode lasts only 3-5 min. Distract yourself until the craving passes – go for a walk, sip water, or eat sugarless candy. Cravings will reduce in intensity and frequency with time.
- **Anxiety and irritability** are common and can last 1-2 weeks. Warn your family and friends beforehand. Deep breathing or relaxation exercises, going for a walk, and cutting down on caffeine can help.
- **Fatigue:** nicotine is a stimulant, and your body can take 2-4 weeks to adjust and recover its normal energy levels. Take time to rest, **drink lots of water (staying hydrated can reduce withdrawal symptoms)**, and try exercise or a cool shower to bring your energy up.
- **Difficulty concentrating** and feeling foggy-headed is very common in the first 2 weeks. To help stay focused, eat small amounts of food every few hours instead of three big meals, and don't skip meals.
- **Anger and frustration**, or even fearfulness are typical especially within the first few days. Let people know what to expect. Vent your feelings safely, talk with a friend about them, or work through the situation.
- **Depressed mood:** Talk to a friend or family member. Plan enjoyable activities with others, and reward yourself for your progress. Exercise can also help. If depression lasts more than a month, consult your doctor.
- **Increased appetite** is common and can last for several weeks. To prevent weight gain, eat smaller amounts

## TIPS TO STAY ON TRACK:



Exercise



Snack often



Use relaxation techniques



Reward yourself



Remind yourself of the benefits

more often and choose healthy, crunchy snacks like vegetable sticks. Drink lots of water, don't skip breakfast, and add activities like walking or exercise to your routine.

- **Insomnia or difficulty sleeping** can last for a few weeks. Try relaxation exercises before bed and reducing caffeine. Non-smokers do not need as much sleep as smokers, so soon you may feel more rested with less sleep.

## MANAGING SETBACKS

Don't be too hard on yourself if you slip. **On average, it takes at least 6 attempts to successfully quit.** Very few people nail quitting the first time around. Like most things, it takes time and practice.

Think about what led to the slip, and then work on a plan to do something different next time, including:

- Using positive self-talk to re-confirm the decision to quit
- Calling a friend or Quit Coach at **1-877-455-2233** (toll-free)
- Trying a new quit strategy like using nicotine patches or gum

① *For more resources including access to free Quit Coaches, visit:*

- Quitnow.ca (BC Lung Foundation) [www.quitnow.ca](http://www.quitnow.ca)
- Smoker's Helpline (Canadian Cancer Society) [www.smokershelpline.ca](http://www.smokershelpline.ca)
- BC Smoking Cessation Program
  - <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents/what-we-cover/bc-smoking-cessation-program>