

A close-up photograph of a person's hands breaking a cigarette in half. The person's face is blurred in the background. The cigarette is held between the fingers, and the tip is being snapped off.

Tobacco Cessation



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Quitting is winning

At the end of this brochure is a list of free services offered by your health plan to help you quit. We hope this is the time for you to stop smoking and that the following information will help you succeed.

According to researchers, cigarette smoking is the most avoidable cause of disabling illness and death. It is linked to lung cancer, emphysema or commonly known as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and blood vessel blockages that may lead to heart attacks or strokes. Smoking may also be linked to conditions like bronchitis and diabetes. Many serious illnesses such as asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, and multiple sclerosis are also worsened by smoking.

Millions of people try quitting tobacco every day but often make the attempt by themselves and without a coordinated plan. Quitting is possible, but success is more likely with preparation and support from others.

The “tobacco/nicotine cessation” process is one that takes a customized approach and requires purpose and persistence. For most, it will also require a few simple and easy changes in their daily routine.

Secondhand smoking also kills

It’s not just about you. Cigarette smoking itself accounts for more than 480,000 deaths, or 1 of every 5 deaths, per year in the United States. Most smokers know their risks from smoking but may not understand how their smoking affects others. A smoker and a bystander inhale

about the same amount of chemicals from second-hand smoke. In fact, secondhand smoke can be even more toxic. Secondhand smoke can increase the risk of lung cancer and heart disease by almost 30 percent. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are more likely to catch infections such as pneumonia or bronchitis, and are more likely to have severe asthma attacks that result in lost school time, trips to the emergency room and even hospitalizations. Pregnant women who smoke increase the risk of health problems for their developing babies, like birth defects and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). By deciding to quit smoking, you can be the biggest winner to yourself and a hero to your family and friends!

The expense of tobacco products is likely hurting your financial future. For example, purchasing a pack of cigarettes per day for 50 years at \$6.96 per pack can add up to more than \$127,000 in costs. Factor in potential lost work time, reduced job productivity, expenses for smoking-related illnesses, etc. and the costs really begin to add up.



How safe is vaping?

Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive, dangerous for pregnant adults and their developing babies, and may harm the health of youth and young adults. E-cigarette aerosols may also contain other harmful ingredients like heavy metals or chemicals which can cause cancer. More research on long-term health effects is needed.

Benefits of NOT using tobacco

Below are some changes you may notice after quitting tobacco.

- **Within 20 minutes** – decrease in heart rate and blood pressure
- **Within 12 hours** – more oxygen flow to the brain and the heart
- **Within 2 weeks to 3 months** – improved blood circulation and lung function
- **Within 1 to 9 months** – less coughing and decreased shortness of breath
- **Within 1 year** – risk of heart attack and heart disease cuts in half
- **Within 5 years** – risk of mouth, throat, and bladder cancer is half that of a smoker; risk of stroke can drop to that of a non-smoker

How to win at quitting

It is important to be in the right state of mind, both physically and mentally, for successful tobacco cessation. Trying to quit when you are not ready may drive you farther away from your goal! Below are the different stages of change and how to successfully move through each of them:

1. Start thinking about quitting. Making the decision to quit is an important first step!

- Have a personal reason to quit tobacco and set a realistic goal. Perhaps your goal is to be at your child's graduation in 15 years, or to play basketball with some old friends.

2. Preparation is the key to success. Here are some helpful tips when you decide to quit:

- Set a quit date at least two weeks before the day you plan to quit.
- Find a support system, whether it is family, friends, or an organized support group. You can also try using the toll-free 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) hotline. Having a group of people to cheer you on makes quitting much more successful than doing it by yourself.
- Identify your triggers for smoking in advance and plan how they can be avoided.
- Ask your friends, family, or coworkers to assist in helping you to quit and understanding your need to change activities that trigger tobacco cravings.
- Increase your physical activity level before quitting.

- Increase the quality of your diet before your quit date to avoid replacing smoking with eating when you stop.
- Tell your doctor about your plan to quit and ask them to follow up on your progress initially and with each office visit. Your doctor may recommend prescription or non-prescription medicines to help you reach your goal.

3. Taking action is often the most challenging stage. Below are some tips to help you stay tobacco free during this period:

- Many people associate smoking with a routine, so alter or modify it. Take your spouse's car to work, or use a different route on the way back home. Try something different.
- Identify other people, places or things that trigger your need to smoke and avoid them. Don't join your coworkers at a bar or hang out with them during their smoke breaks at work if that triggers you to smoke. If you smoke with your morning coffee and this acts as a trigger, then change to another beverage such as green tea.



- Find something to chew on. Replace cigarettes or chewing tobacco with sugar-free gum or sugar-free hard candies. Snack on cigarette-shaped vegetables like carrots.
- Reward yourself with small gifts for staying tobacco-free!
- Identify a desired purchase and take the money that would be spent daily on tobacco products, and “bank” it to build up the savings needed for the purchase instead. Or, just keep saving!

4. Maintain your non-smoking lifestyle by avoiding temptations and asking your support team to remind you why you quit. Using group therapy or a counseling program can help you share your progress and even help other ex-smokers remain tobacco-free. Combining tobacco cessation medications and behavioral counseling has shown to improve results in people trying to quit.

5. Understand that relapse is common, and may happen before you are completely tobacco free. Don’t look at relapse as failure but rather a foundation for a more prepared next effort. The important part is to understand what caused the relapse. Improving your plan of action instead of diving into the action stage right away may improve your chances for success! Do your best to keep your smoking to a minimum during this stage.

Medicines to help quit tobacco use

Quitting tobacco/nicotine can cause withdrawal effects that, for most, can be reduced to a minimum. This is the reason why tobacco addiction is considered a chronic disease and the main reason why prescription medicines are so beneficial in helping to quit. Listed below are some prescription and non-prescription medicines that can help you quit:



- Bupropion
- Varenicline
- Nicotine Replacement Therapies

The doses are based on how many cigarettes you smoke. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about what dose you should take.

Nicotine gum

- Chew up to one stick of gum every hour. Once it becomes bitter or you feel a tingling sensation in your mouth, hold it in the cheek so the released nicotine can be absorbed.

Nicotine inhaler

- This mimics a cigarette with fewer harmful chemicals. Clean the mouthpiece with soap and water regularly.

Nicotine nasal spray

- If necessary, blow your nose prior to use. Spray inside the nose toward the sides of the nostrils not the middle to get the most out of the spray.

Nicotine patches

- Place the patch on a hairless section of the skin. Replace the patch daily on a different place on the skin to prevent a skin rash. If you are having trouble sleeping, remove the patch a few hours before bedtime.



Nicotine lozenges

- Dissolve the lozenge in your mouth slowly like you would with hard candy until it becomes bitter. Then hold it in the cheek so the released nicotine can be absorbed.

Each of these medicines has some advantages and drawbacks to consider. Make sure you talk with your doctor before choosing the right therapy for you. Some of them, such as bupropion and varenicline, are started one to two weeks before the official quit date. Additionally, be sure to ask your doctor about getting the pneumonia vaccine and your annual flu vaccine.

Screening for lung cancer

If you are aged 50 to 80, have a history of heavy smoking (average of one pack per day for 20 years), and have smoked within the past 15 years, you should ask your doctor if annual screening for lung cancer is right for you. Research shows this testing can detect lung cancer earlier which can help increase the chances for successful treatment.

Tobacco cessation benefits

Eligible Blue Cross and Blue Shield Service Benefit Plan members can receive certain tobacco cessation products for free. Eligible over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription tobacco cessation products obtained from an in-network retail pharmacy with a prescription from your doctor are included in this program. You must meet age requirements for prescribed tobacco cessation drugs to receive this benefit. Visit www.fepblue.org/tobacco for more information.



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