


Quitting and Staying Quit

The more you know about how to quit, the better your chances of success. So, how do you start? Or, if you've quit successfully before but slipped back, how can you quit for good this time? Quitting is a very personal experience. There's no one way that works for everyone. A good way to start is to get as much information as you can, and decide on a plan that's right for you.

By reading the steps below, you'll learn about what to expect during the quitting process. You'll also find ideas for developing your own "I quit" plan.

When you take on any challenge, a tried and tested plan can be your road map to success. What has helped other people stop smoking? According to the U.S. Public Health Service, studies show that the five steps listed below can help you quit, and stay smoke-free. For best results, use all five.

1. Get Ready

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- a. Choose a specific quit date and mark it on your calendar. If you give yourself at least a month to prepare, you're more likely to succeed than if you decide New Year's Eve to quit the next day. Pick a week when your stress level is likely to be low.
 - b. Think about all the ways that quitting smoking will improve your life and your health. Make a list to remind yourself.
 - c. Get rid of temptations and reminders of smoking. Throw out all of your cigarettes. Remove ashtrays from your home, car and workplace.
 - d. If you've tried to quit before, think about what you learned from those attempts. Are there certain people, places, feelings or activities that encourage you to smoke? Plan to avoid them as much as you can.

2. Get Support and Encouragement

- a. Talk to friends, family and coworkers about why you want to quit, and how important it is to you. One way they might help is by writing encouraging notes: "I'm so proud of you for not smoking." "I know you can do it." Post the notes in places you usually smoke—on the coffeemaker, above the TV, on the dashboard of your car.
- b. If they are smokers, ask them not to smoke around you and to keep cigarettes out of sight. If you know successful quitters, ask them for support and tips.
- c. Get expert help. Ask a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or other health professional for advice. Look for quit-smoking programs at local hospitals and health-care centers, or through nonprofit organizations. If counseling is not available where you are, or you prefer not to attend a group, try a [telephone quitline](#) or [web-based quitting support](#).

3. Learn and Practice New Routines and Behaviors

- a. Plan ways to distract yourself when the urge to smoke strikes: Take a 2-minute walk, call a friend.
- b. Have other things nearby that you can hold in your hands (or put in your mouth), like a pen, carrot sticks, or fat-free popcorn.
- c. Look for fun activities that don't include smoking to reward yourself and reduce stress: a hot bath, a walk with a friend.

4. Get Medication and Use It Correctly

For many people, medication can be the key to getting through those first weeks or months without cigarettes. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved seven medications to help smokers quit. Five help you manage withdrawal symptoms and urges by providing small amounts of nicotine. The other two options are the prescription drugs bupropion (Zyban®) and varenicline (Chantix®). Research shows that taking either bupropion or varenicline also helps reduce cravings for cigarettes.

Be sure to speak with your health care provider about how medication can help you in your efforts to quit. These medications can cause side effects. Additional information is available from public health authorities, such as the National Cancer Institute of the Department of Health and Human Services. Some smoking cessation medications are available at your local pharmacy without a prescription; others must be prescribed by a doctor. (Note: These medications may be available in generic or brand-name form.) This information is not an endorsement of any brand or any product.

Smoking Cessation Medications

Type	Form	Some brand names	Availability
Nicotine Replacement Therapies	Gum	Nicorette®	Over-the-counter (OTC)
	Patch	Nicoderm®, Habitrol®, Prostep®, Nicotrol®	OTC
	Inhaler	Nicotrol®	Prescription
	Nasal Spray	Nicotrol®	Prescription
	Lozenge	Commit®	OTC
Bupropion	Pill	Zyban®	Prescription
Varenicline	Pill	Chantix®	Prescription

5. Staying Smoke Free

For most people, quitting is not the biggest challenge; it's staying quit. The final key to successful quitting is being prepared to handle difficult situations and to recover if you slip.

- a. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you are at greatest risk for relapse in the first three months after quitting. Plan ways you can cope when you are around other smokers or in difficult situations where you're tempted to take a puff.
- b. If you used to smoke to handle stress or calm your nerves, it's important to find other ways to do that—because stressful things will always happen sooner or later. Try to integrate stress reduction into your daily life. Some people find it helpful to meditate, to do yoga or tai chi, or to go for a run.
- c. If you do slip and have a smoke, don't beat yourself up, and don't give up. Instead, think of what you can learn from this. Review what led you to smoke. Plan how you'll avoid or cope with that the next time. Ask for help from friends or experts.
- d. Limit or monitor your use of coffee and alcohol; these trigger the urge to smoke for many people.
- e. Eat healthy foods and get some exercise to manage your weight and moods.
- f. Remind yourself of the benefits of not smoking.

For more get-ready tips like these, go to [You Can Quit Smoking Personalized Quit Plan](http://www2.pmus.com/en/quitassist/quitting/index.asp).

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