

Quit smoking for good: Where to start in order to stop successfully

Practical tips and tools for achieving your freedom from cigarettes



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Introduction

Over the course of the *Break the habit: Commit to quit* campaign, we hope you’ve learned more about the poisonous and addictive ingredients in cigarettes. You’ve also learned about some of the health- and life-saving benefits of quitting.

We want you to be successful in giving up cigarettes. We know how tough it is. If you’ve tried to quit before (even many times), please don’t give up trying.

In this booklet, we share some practical tips, tools, and personalized exercises to help:

- Clarify your thinking about smoking
- Strengthen your determination to quit for good
- Overcome obstacles that may have defeated you in the past



Chapter one: Assessing your readiness to quit

My “pros” and “cons” for quitting

When you’re facing an important decision, it’s often good to look at the pros and cons. On a piece of paper (or your computer), make two columns. On one side, list all the reasons that giving up smoking would be beneficial for you. On the other side, list all the reasons why you don’t want to try to quit.

Remember that the reasons should matter to you, not someone else. Here’s a sample list:

Pros for giving up smoking	Cons for giving up smoking
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I want to be a better role model for my children (I don’t want them to smoke)• I hate spending so much money on cigarettes, and I know I can put that money to better use• I’m afraid of getting cancer and dying• I have trouble with shortness of breath, and it limits my activities with my children, family and friends• I have family members with respiratory problems like asthma. I hate the idea that smoking could be making them sicker.• I have trouble enjoying myself in any place or situation where I can’t smoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I’ve tried quitting before, but I gained weight and I hated it• Smoking calms me down when I’m stressed out• Most of my friends smoke, and I don’t think I can be around other smokers and not smoke

Writing this kind of list is an important step. It can help you see whether you have more reasons to quit than to keep smoking. Here are two more important things to remember:

- If you tried to quit but went back to smoking, you can learn from that experience
- You can use your reasons not to quit (your “cons”) to help you develop a plan because you know the barriers you need to overcome

Chapter two: Understanding your habits and why you smoke

Before you develop a plan to stop smoking, it's helpful to understand why you smoke. Yes, cigarettes have addictive ingredients. But often reaching for a cigarette is a habit or ritual. It becomes such an important part of your daily routine that the situation itself becomes a trigger to smoke. These triggers or habits can be places, people, situations, and even moods.

Smoking habits or triggers

You may not even be aware of why you reach for a cigarette—only that you feel the need to smoke. Keeping a record of every time you smoke will help you be more aware of the habits that are tied to smoking. As you become more aware of these triggers, you can develop strategies for dealing with them as part of your plan.

I reach for a cigarette...	Always	Sometimes	Never
When I feel stressed or nervous			
When I feel angry			
When I feel tired, depressed, or bored			
When I need to occupy my hands			
When I have a cup of coffee			
After I eat			
While I'm talking on the phone			
When I have an alcoholic drink			
When I watch TV			
When I'm with other people who are smoking			
When someone offers me a cigarette			
To celebrate something			
When Driving			
During a work break			

List other situations that you associate with smoking	Always	Sometimes	Never

Three-day smoking log

Now that you’ve identified the places, people, situations, and moods that can make you reach for a cigarette, log the following for each cigarette for at least three days. Here’s a format you can use (add as many lines as you need to record each cigarette you smoke each day):

Date and day of the week:					
What time?	Where (location — be specific)?	Who were you with?	What were you doing?	What were you feeling?	Why did you smoke?
Total cigarettes smoked today:					

What do you spend on cigarettes?

Smoking is an expensive habit. Maybe you know how much it costs you a day or a week to buy cigarettes. But in this exercise, we want you to consider not just what you spend, but also what you might be able to do with the money you save when you successfully quit smoking.

Be sure to give yourself time to dream about what you'd like to do with that money!

Price per pack	Multiplied by (x)	# of packs per day	Multiplied by (x)	365 days	=	What I spend on cigarettes per year
	x		x	365	=	

What I spend on cigarettes per year	x	5 years	=	How much money I'll save over five years	What I could do with the money I've saved
					• •
What I spend on cigarettes per year	x	10 years	=	How much money I'll save over 10 years	What I could do with the money I've saved
					• •
What I spend on cigarettes per year	x	20 years	=	How much money I'll save over 20 years	What I could do with the money I've saved
					• •

Five questions to help assess your addiction

Answer these five questions to find out if you have a strong addiction to nicotine:

1. Do you smoke your first cigarette within the first 30 minutes after you wake up in the morning? ☐ yes ☐ no
2. Do you smoke 20 cigarettes (one pack) or more each day? ☐ yes ☐ no
3. At times when you can't smoke or you do not have any cigarettes, do you feel a craving for one? ☐ yes ☐ no
4. Is it difficult for you to keep from smoking for more than a few minutes? ☐ yes ☐ no
5. When you are sick enough to stay in bed, do you still smoke? ☐ yes ☐ no

The more "yes" answers you gave, the more likely you are to have a strong addiction to the nicotine in cigarettes. If you answered "yes" to more than two questions, it may be especially important for you to use nicotine replacement therapy (e.g., nicotine patch, gum, or lozenge) and/or a non-nicotine prescription medication to help you deal with nicotine withdrawal and gradually break your addiction. Ask your healthcare provider about these products.

Chapter three: Time to create a plan

In the last chapter, you put together a lot of useful information about your smoking habits. Now you're going to put that information to good use: to help you create a plan for quitting.

You might be thinking, "Why should I write a plan to quit smoking?"

We write plans for so many things. You might follow a plan to lose weight. Or pay a financial advisor to create an investment or retirement plan.

A plan helps you set goals and strengthen your sense of purpose. It requires you to anticipate obstacles to success and figure out how you'll deal with them.

Let's start planning how to achieve your freedom from cigarettes.

Set a quit date

Be intentional. Any day is a good day to quit smoking. But rather than be spontaneous ("I think I'll quit today!"), set a date to quit.

- Try to choose a date that doesn't conflict with another stressful event
- Choose a date that's no more than 30 days away (so you have time to prepare, but not so much time that you lose momentum)

Mark the date on your calendar. Perhaps it says, "Last cigarette!" Or "quit smoking!" Or "quitting for good!" Or "today's the day to quit!"

If you have a family calendar, consider sharing this date. Involving others in your plan to quit can be invaluable.

Identify your support network

Sadly, not everyone will support your efforts. If you have friends or family members who are smokers, they may not want you to be successful. Instead, focus on identifying people who will support you. Once you start thinking about who might be in that group, it might surprise you how many sources of support are available. When thinking about your support network, identify what kind of support you need from each individual as the reasons may vary. For example:

- A co-worker (or even several people at work) may provide support throughout the day when you are tempted to reach for a cigarette
- A close friend may encourage you to try one of your alternatives to smoking—like taking a brisk walk together—when you're faced with a personal challenge (you'll create these alternatives in the next section)

Keep the following in mind when establishing your support network:



Family members, friends, co-workers, ex-smokers, non-smokers

- Identify people who will be active supporters of your efforts
- Share your plan with them
- Share with them what you've learned about why you smoke and your habits and triggers for smoking
- Ask them to be part of your Personal Contract to Stop Smoking (see the last section of this chapter)



Current smokers (family, friends, co-workers)

- If a close family member smokes, ask them to consider quitting, too
- If you can't avoid a family member who is a smoker, then try to change your family patterns that make smoking more likely (for example, if you both smoke after dinner, try going out for a walk instead before your spouse lights up a cigarette)
- In general, if you're able, avoid spending time with smokers



Healthcare provider, support groups

- Check with your healthcare provider for local resources
- Consider joining a support group for people who are also trying to quit smoking

Write down alternatives for triggers

As part of your preparations, you listed the habits and triggers that make you want to grab a cigarette. In your plan, look back at when and why you smoke (your triggers). When cravings hit, you may not be able to think clearly. Planning ahead can help you take action quickly to distract yourself until the craving passes.

Here's a format you can use:

I reach for a cigarette when ...	Instead, I'm going to ...
I feel stressed or nervous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a brisk walk (even if it's around the building at work) • Stretch, take deep, steady breaths, meditate • Talk to someone who signed your personal contract (see the last section of this chapter) • Watch a funny video and have a good laugh • Listen to a favorite piece of music
I'm talking on the phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep a pad of paper handy and try doodling or drawing • Keep taking sips of water throughout the call • Get a stress ball or worry beads to keep your hands busy
After I eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get up immediately after you eat and take a brisk walk • Stretch, take deep, steady breaths, meditate • Brush your teeth or use mouthwash • Chew sugarless gum

Therapies, medications, nicotine substitutes, and other smoking or smokeless products

At this point you may want to ask: "Why can't I just substitute an e-cigarette when I feel the urge to smoke?"

This brings up the topic of what kinds of therapies, medications, nicotine substitutes, and other smoking or smokeless products can assist you in quitting.

The most important thing is that the preparation and planning is separate from any medical (traditional or non-traditional) support you use. While we cannot cover all of the different treatment options in this booklet, here are general categories of products or alternative therapies. When considering your options for smoking cessation products, it's best to talk to your healthcare provider.

Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) without a prescription	Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) with a prescription	Non-nicotine prescription medications
Nicotine gum Nicotine lozenges Nicotine skin patches	Nicotine inhalers Nicotine nasal sprays	Prescribed by your healthcare provider

Write a personal contract to quit smoking

Generally, people who put their plan to quit smoking in writing and ask someone to witness it are more committed to their goal and more likely to succeed.

Use all you have learned to develop a specific plan to quit smoking. Here's a sample of a personal contract.

Note that most of the information in the contract—the date that you will quit, your support network of people—are things you've already worked through in your plan. What we've added to the contract is a reward. It's important to acknowledge even the smallest victories over cigarette smoking because they're important milestones in a very tough battle.

You'll notice that we suggest that you do something special on the day you quit: buy yourself a special present on this special day!

In the contract, we suggest you plan another reward when you reach the two-week milestone and haven't had a cigarette. And then plan another reward when you reach other milestones without a cigarette. You don't have to spend a lot of money on a reward. It just has to be something special.

My personal contract to quit smoking

I will quit smoking on:

I will do the following to get ready to quit:

When I feel the urge to smoke, I will:

I will ask people to help me stay smoke-free by assisting in these ways:

Person	Specific help

My reward for staying smoke-free for two weeks will be:

My reward for staying smoke-free for one month will be:

My reward for staying smoke-free for three months will be:

My reward for staying smoke-free for six months will be:

My reward for staying smoke-free for one year will be:

Your signature

Date

Witness signature

Date

Chapter four: Prepare for quit day

Some people find it helpful to gradually reduce their smoking rather than quitting all at once. For example, during the weeks before your quit date, reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke by 25 percent each week (for example, instead of 20 per day, smoke 15, then 10, then 5).

Here's a suggestion for an approach to quitting day:

Four weeks before your quit date	The day before you quit	The night before you quit	The day you quit
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce the number of cigarettes by 25 percent each week (for example, instead of 20 cigarettes per day, smoke 15) 2. Smoke the same number of cigarettes, but use a brand you don't like with less nicotine <p>Try a combination of 1 & 2</p>	<p>Do as many of these as possible:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change your environment. Do whatever it takes to make your surroundings as smoke-free as possible • Throw away all the cigarettes, matches, and ashtrays from your home and office • Air out your home and shampoo the carpet, if needed • Wash or dry clean any clothes that smell like smoke • As much as possible, spend the day with non-smokers • Plan to do something special tomorrow to change your routine • Remind your support network and others who don't know about your plan that you are quitting tomorrow. Ask them to help by not offering you cigarettes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get plenty of sleep (the goal is to wake up rested and ready to implement your plan) • Plan to start your day with a healthy breakfast and some exercise • Be optimistic you will be successful • Feel good about yourself and what you're doing. Minutes after your last cigarette, you'll be healthier. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive to work a different way • Eat lunch in a new place (even a new restaurant, but don't give yourself permission to overeat) • Do something fun and special during the day or evening • Go shopping and buy yourself a present on this special day • Talk to a friend you haven't spoken to in a long time

Chapter five: Quitting for good

You may experience the urge to smoke almost immediately. Think of an urge as a wave that builds crests and then drops off suddenly. Use some of the tools you planned on ahead of time to deal with the urge to smoke.

Record your smoking urges

Remember that smoking becomes a habit associated with many activities, which means the need to smoke may last much longer than the actual physical craving from the drugs in cigarettes. Of course, each person's experience will be different.

Sometimes it's hard for us to recognize our own progress. We may dwell too much on slips rather than achievements. This is why we suggest tracking your cravings for the first four weeks. You may still have the urge to smoke at certain times of day or under specific circumstances, but perhaps other triggers have gone away entirely by applying one of your alternatives!

Realizing that you've eliminated some of those triggers may help motivate you to keep going and defeat a tougher trigger. Keep building on the alternatives you already identified (i.e. taking a walk, deep breathing or meditation) and use this calendar to check off when you successfully used an alternative.

Only record each time you responded to a craving with an alternative activity. This exercise is about recording and applauding your successes, not slips! Step by step, you can beat all of your triggers!

Week 1	Time	Things I did instead of smoking
Sunday	6 a.m.	Brushed teeth 4 times instead of smoking
	8 a.m.	Drank herbal tea instead of coffee
	10 a.m.	Went for brisk walk instead of going out for a coffee break
	11 a.m.	Sipped water while on a call
	(continue for the rest of the day)	
# of times I used an alternative trigger today:		
Monday		
	# of times I used an alternative trigger today:	
Tuesday		
	# of times I used an alternative trigger today:	

Week 1	Time	Things I did instead of smoking
Wednesday		
	# of times I used an alternative trigger today:	
Thursday		
	# of times I used an alternative trigger today:	
Friday		
	# of times I used an alternative trigger today:	
Saturday		
	# of times I used an alternative trigger today:	
End of week 1	Total number of times I used alternatives to smoking:	

If you slip

Can you have the occasional cigarette while you’re trying to quit? When it comes to cigarette smoking, every cigarette is harmful to you (and to others around you because of secondhand smoke).

Be alert to potential problems that can cause slips (remember that you anticipated many of these triggers in your plan).

If you do slip and have a cigarette, try not to dwell on it. Don’t tell yourself that you’ve failed. It’s important to stay positive and re-commit to your goal of being a non-smoker.

If you joined a support group, be sure to go to the next meeting. And don’t hesitate to call people in your support network for encouragement.

Keep a list of slips. Write down what the circumstances were that triggered your urge to smoke.

You may find a pattern to the slips—a certain time of day or activity that’s a particularly tough trigger for you. Try to figure out what you would do differently in situations that you find more challenging.

Date	Slip	What happened (circumstances)	What I learned (and would do differently)



Eating and exercise

You may be worried that if you quit smoking, you'll overeat and gain weight. In fact, someone may have told you that everyone gains weight when they stop smoking. But it isn't inevitable.

When you planned your alternatives to smoking, hopefully exercise was one that you used often. Exercise is not only a healthy distraction and alternative to smoking, but it can also help you avoid overeating. The American Heart Association wants you to consider that gaining a few pounds isn't as important as saving your life and the lives of others. Here are some things they suggest for avoiding weight gain when you stop smoking:¹

What should I eat?	How can physical activity help?	What are good activities to help keep weight off
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pick a variety of fruits and vegetables • Select whole-grain cereals, pastas and breads • Choose fat-free or low-fat snacks like pretzels, air-popped popcorn • Try unsalted pretzels, air popped popcorn, or unsalted nuts for a snack • Read food labels and choose healthful foods low in sodium, saturated and trans fats, and added sugars • Cut back on alcohol and drinks with added sugars (soft drinks, fruit drinks, fruit punch, and other drinks with added sugars) • Drink lots of water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It releases stress and calms you • It can help control your appetite • It helps keep your mind off cigarettes • It may help control cravings and the urge to smoke • It burns calories and can help you lose weight if you take in fewer calories than you use up • It can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight • It can improve your mood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk briskly in your neighborhood or at indoor shopping malls • Do gardening or yard work • Take stairs instead of escalators and elevators • Park farther from stores and walk • Learn a new dance • Start jogging • Ride a bicycle • Try aerobic dance classes or bike classes at the gym • Aim for at least 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity aerobic physical activity (like brisk walking). Or, you can do 75 minutes a week of vigorous intensity exercise.

1. INTERVENT International, "Tobacco Cessation Program," 2020

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