

Smoking – How to Quit



Cigarette smoking is the greatest single cause of illness and premature death in the UK. Stopping smoking can make a big difference to your health. See your practice nurse if you want to give up, but are finding it difficult. This is a brief summary about smoking.

Why is smoking so bad?

Smoking is the greatest cause of early death in the UK. If you smoke, it is not just that you are likely to die earlier. Smoking-related diseases such as:

- Lung cancer & other cancers such as mouth, stomach, kidneys,
- Heart disease
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which can cause distressing symptoms, often for several years before death.
- Asthma & other lung diseases
- Raynaud's phenomenon (which causes cold hands and feet) and osteoporosis (thinning of the bones) are often made worse by smoking.
- Male smokers have an increased chance of becoming impotent in middle age (due to the damaging effect of smoking on the blood vessels).
- Bad breath
- Also, on average, children who live with smokers have more illnesses than children who live in a smoke-free home.

Timeline of health benefits after stopping smoking ...

After...	Health Benefit...
72 hours	Breathing becomes easier. Bronchial tubes begin to relax and energy levels increase
1 month	Skin appearance improves owing to improved skin perfusion
3–9 months	Cough, wheezing, and breathing problems improve and lung function increases by up to 10%
1 year	Risk of a heart attack falls to about half that of a smoker
10 years	Risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker
15 years	Risk of heart attack falls to the same level as someone who has never smoked

Some tips which may help you to stop smoking

- **Set a date for stopping**, and stop completely. (Some people prefer the idea of cutting down gradually. However, research has shown that if you smoke less cigarettes than usual, you are likely to smoke more of each cigarette, and

nicotine levels remain nearly the same. Therefore, it is usually best to stop once and for all from a set date.)

- **Tell everyone that you are stopping.** Friends and family often give support.
- **Get rid of ashtrays, lighters, and all cigarettes.**
- **Be prepared for some withdrawal symptoms.** When you stop smoking, you are likely to get symptoms such as: feeling sick, headaches, anxiety, being irritable, craving, and just feeling awful. These symptoms are caused by the lack of nicotine that your body has been used to. They tend to peak after 12-24 hours, and then gradually ease over 2-4 weeks.
- **Be aware of situations** in which you are most likely to want to smoke (for example, the pub). Try changing your routine for the first few weeks.
- **Take one day at a time.** Mark off each successful day on a calendar. Look at it when you feel tempted to smoke, and tell yourself you don't want to start all over again.
- **Be positive.** Tell people that you don't smoke. You will smell better. After a few weeks you should feel better, taste your food more, and cough less. You will have more money.
- **Food.** Some people worry about gaining weight when they give up smoking as the appetite may improve. Be prepared for an increase in appetite, and try not to increase fatty or sugary foods as snacks. Try sugar-free gum and fruit instead.
- **Don't despair if you fail** and have a cigarette. You don't have to start smoking again. Examine the reasons why you felt it was more difficult at that particular time, and try again. On average, people who eventually stop smoking have made 3 or 4 previous attempts.
- **Stop smoking clinics** are available on the NHS. They have a good success in helping people to stop smoking. Your doctor may refer you to one if you are keen to stop smoking but are finding it difficult to do so.
- **Various medicines** can increase your chance of quitting. These include Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) which comes as gums, sprays, patches, tablets, lozenges, and inhalers. You can buy NRT without a prescription. Also, medicines called bupropion (trade name 'Zyban') and varenicline (trade name 'Champix') can help. These are available on prescription.

Further help and information

Quit - a charity that helps people to stop smoking.
Quitline: 0800 00 22 00 Web: www.quit.org.uk

Smokefree - information from the NHS
Free smoking helpline 0800 022 4 332 Web: www.smokefree.nhs.uk
For help and advice on stopping smoking, and for details of your local NHS Stop Smoking Service.