



# It's time to quit.

When it comes to smoking,  
be a quitter



Quitting smoking is the most important thing smokers can do to live a longer, healthier life.<sup>1</sup> Yet almost one in every six American adults smoke.<sup>1</sup>



## You're not weak, you're addicted

If you've tried to stop smoking and always seem to pick it up again, you're not alone. Nicotine, the drug in tobacco, is as addictive as heroin or cocaine. A smoker who tries to quit faces up to a few weeks of withdrawal. The physical addiction to nicotine is in full force after just a few weeks of smoking. There's also a mental addiction to the habit of smoking.



## Making it through the cravings

Here are some ways to cope:<sup>2,3</sup>

- **Take a brisk walk.** Even a five or 10-minute walk can help you through your craving and withdrawal symptoms.
- **Spend time in places where you can't smoke.** Try the library, museums, bookstores and malls.
- **Change other habits too.** If you typically smoke with your morning coffee, have tea instead. If you change your routine, you are less likely to feel something is missing.
- **List your reasons.** Make a list of all your reasons for quitting. Keep copies of it in your wallet, at your desk and on the refrigerator.
- **Don't be fooled.** Remember, there is no such thing as "just one" cigarette or puff. The strong desire to smoke will eventually pass.
- **Stall.** If you feel like you are about to give in, tell yourself you have to wait at least ten minutes. This will often be enough time for you to get past the craving.
- **Reward yourself.** Save the money you would have spent on tobacco for a daily treat or a major purchase.

## Some symptoms of nicotine withdrawal

Dizziness, depression, frustration or anger,  
trouble focusing, headache, trouble sleeping  
and bad dreams, and nausea or hunger.<sup>4</sup>



### Sources

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: *Smoking & Tobacco Use Fast Facts* (accessed March 2019): [cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/fast\\_facts](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts).
- 2 Wiley Online Library: *The acute effects of exercise on cigarette cravings, withdrawal symptoms, affect and smoking behaviour: a systematic review* (accessed March 2019): [onlinelibrary.wiley.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com).
- 3 Mayo Clinic: *Quit Smoking* (accessed January March 2019): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).
- 4 American Lung Association: *E-cigarettes and Lung Health* (accessed March 2019): [lung.org](https://www.lung.org).
- 5 American Cancer Society: *Guide to Quitting Smoking* (accessed March 2019): [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org).



### Getting help

Between medicines and counseling programs, there is help for people who want to quit. Getting counseling and support can double your chances of success. Nicotine Anonymous ([nicotine-anonymous.org](http://nicotine-anonymous.org)) offers support on the phone, via text, online and in person. You can also call the National Quitline ([smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov)) at **1-877-448-7848** or **1-877-44U-QUIT**.

Drug treatments can also help. Nicotine replacement therapy gives you nicotine through gums, patches, sprays, lozenges or inhalers, without the other dangerous chemicals in cigarettes. This way you can focus on breaking the habit of smoking before you have to go through the physical withdrawal.



### There are no healthy alternatives to smoking

Using e-cigarettes, or vaping, is not a healthy alternative to cigarettes or smokeless tobacco. Vapor from an e-cigarette contains harmful chemicals that can cause cancer, along with other health problems. Vaping around other people exposes them to harmful chemicals, as well.<sup>5</sup>



### Timeline for withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms usually show up within a few hours of the last cigarette. They are at their worst on the second or third day, then they gradually go away over the next couple of weeks. But while you're cranky, tired and depressed, good things are happening to your body.

- **Within minutes:** Your blood pressure drops.
- **Within 12 hours:** The level of carbon monoxide in your blood returns to normal.
- **Within a week:** Most of the nicotine has left your body.
- **Within three months:** Your circulation and breathing improve.
- **One to nine months after quitting:** Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; your lungs regain the ability to clean themselves, reducing your risk of infection.
- **One year after quitting:** Your risk of heart disease goes down.
- **Five years after quitting:** Your risk of stroke goes down.
- **Ten years after quitting:** Your risk of getting cancer of the lung, mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix and pancreas goes down.
- **Fifteen years after quitting:** You have no more risk of heart disease than if you had never smoked.

