

Smoking: Do I Want to Quit?

How do you feel about quitting smoking?

Check the box below that best describes how you feel about quitting smoking:

- I like to smoke, and I'm not planning to quit.
 I like lots of things about smoking, but I would like to quit.
 I'm ready to quit smoking now.

If you answered, "**I like to smoke, and I'm not planning to quit,**" ask yourself why so many other people have quit smoking. Consider this: 50 million Americans are former smokers. What do you think were their reasons for quitting? Some of those reasons may also apply to you. Do you have problems with breathing, your heart or high blood pressure? Does cancer run in your family? Quitting smoking can lower your chance of having these problems.

If you answered, "**I like lots of things about smoking, but I would like to quit,**" you are like most smokers. Now ask yourself how you will be better off after you quit smoking. You might come up with some of the following answers:

- My health will improve.
In what way? _____
- I'll save money.
How much? _____
- My house and car will be cleaner.
Why is this important to you? _____
- My family and friends will be glad.
Why? _____
- I'll feel better about myself.
In what way? _____
- Another reason is: _____

The more reasons you have to quit smoking, the more likely you are to follow through on your plan to quit. If you answered, "**I'm ready to quit smoking now,**" your doctor wants to help you succeed. The following are some suggestions to help you understand why you smoke. If you know why you smoke, you can make an effective plan for quitting.

What are your smoking triggers?

Start by listing some of the times when you most want a cigarette. These are your "triggers" to smoking. Triggers are events that set off your desire to smoke a cigarette. How would you complete the phrase, "I want a cigarette...?"

- When I see someone else smoking.
- When I see cigarettes in an ashtray.
- When I am cleaning the house.
- When the telephone rings.
- When I am relaxing.
- When I drink a cup of coffee.
- When I have an alcoholic drink.
- During or after meals.

- When I am driving a car.
- After leaving work.
- When I am watching TV.

For each trigger that applies to you, think of something you could do that would make you less likely to smoke. For example, instead of smoking after a meal, you could get right up and brush your teeth.

Do you use cigarettes to relieve uncomfortable feelings?

Smokers often use cigarettes to help them cope with certain uncomfortable feelings. Think about whether you do this. You may have smoked cigarettes when you felt the following emotions:

- Angry
- Mistreated
- Disappointed
- Hurt
- Resentful
- Frightened
- Ashamed
- Frustrated
- Lonely
- Embarrassed
- Abandoned
- Depressed
- Guilty
- Anxious or stressed
- Sorry for yourself
- Bored
- Abused
- Worried

If you know that you use cigarettes to help you cope with stressful or difficult times, you will be better able to get through those times without smoking. Deep breathing, relaxation exercises and guided imagery have helped many smokers quit. Ask your doctor for more information about these techniques.

What can I do about nicotine withdrawal?

If you smoke on a regular basis, you are probably physically dependent on nicotine. You will most likely have withdrawal symptoms when you stop smoking.

Your body gets rid of half the nicotine in your bloodstream every 1 to 2 hours. It doesn't take long after you finish a cigarette before your body wants another one. You may become irritable and agitated, have trouble sleeping, have difficulty concentrating or experience mood swings. These withdrawal symptoms are often the reason smokers give up their effort to quit. They are worse during the first few days after you quit, but most are gone in a few weeks.

Medications doctors can use to treat nicotine withdrawal symptoms include the following:

1. Nicotine gum (brand name: Nicorette)
2. Nicotine patches (brand names: Habitrol, Nicoderm CQ, Nicotrol)
3. Nicotine nasal spray (brand name: Nicotrol NS)
4. Nicotine inhaler (brand name: Nicotrol Inhaler)
5. Nicotine lozenge (brand name: Commit)

A medicine called bupropion (one brand name: Zyban) can also help you quit smoking. It does not contain nicotine, but it helps you resist your urges to smoke. Your family doctor can tell you about these medicines and how medicine can help you quit smoking.