

When Smokers Quit

Within 20 minutes of smoking that last cigarette, the body begins a series of changes that continues for years. All benefits are lost by smoking just one cigarette a day.

20 minutes

Blood pressure drops to normal.

Pulse rate drops to normal.

Body temperature of hands and feet increases to normal.

8 hours

Carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal.

Oxygen level in blood increases to normal.

24 hours

Your chance of heart attack decreases.

48 hours

Nerve endings start to re-grow.

Your ability to smell and taste is enhanced.

2 Weeks to 3 Months

Circulation improves.

Walking becomes easier.

Lung function increases up to 30%.

1 to 9 Months

Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, shortness of breath all decrease.

Cilia re-grow in lungs, increasing ability to clean lungs, and reduce infection.

There is an overall increase in energy.

1 Year

Excess risk of coronary disease is 1/2 that of a smoker.

5 Years

Lung cancer death rate for the average former smoker (1 pack per day) decreases by almost 1/2.

Stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker.

Risk of mouth, throat and esophageal cancer is 1/2 that of a smoker.

10 Years

Lung cancer death rate is similar to that of a nonsmoker.

Precancerous cells are replaced.

Risk of mouth, throat, esophageal, bladder, kidney and pancreatic cancer decreases.

15 Years

Risk of coronary heart disease is that of a nonsmoker.

The Process of Quitting Smoking

Every year, 3 million smokers give up cigarettes. With the right attitude, preparation, and knowledge, you can be one of them. The main step in the process of quitting is deciding to start.

Why Smoke?

Smokers give several general reasons for smoking. They may smoke for:

- Stimulation.
- Handling the cigarette.
- Relaxation.
- Tension reduction.
- Craving.
- Habit.

You may need to find a substitute for cigarettes or find new ways to cope with stressful situations.

Decide to Quit

The hardest part of quitting may actually be making the decision to quit. Write out your reasons to smoke as well as your reasons to quit. Review the list and spend time thinking about whether you want to smoke for the rest of your life or whether you want to quit. If you want to quit someday, actually pick a date and stick with it.

Make Changes

When preparing to quit, change your smoking pattern. Change brands of cigarettes, and try to choose one with a lower nicotine content. Change how much you smoke, where you smoke and when you smoke. Scramble your routine to make smoking less pleasant.

Keep a Diary

Keep a smoking diary the week before you plan to quit. Record where, when and why you are smoking. Imagine yourself not smoking in that situation in the future.

Thinking Positively

Project a positive attitude. Tell yourself you can do it this time. Convince yourself that you will succeed.

Plan Your Deadline

Prepare for quitting by picking your day. Decide what you will do starting on that day to handle your urges. Wake up a nonsmoker. Plan to spend lunch and coffee breaks with nonsmoking friends.

Coping Techniques

Self-talk and keeping busy will help you to overcome urges. Give yourself credit for making the effort to quit smoking. Walking and deep breathing exercises will help overcome urges to smoke.