

## Questions and Answers about Quitting Tobacco

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### WHY SHOULD CIGARETTE SMOKERS THINK ABOUT QUITTING?

One in three smokers dies early because of their smoking. They die of heart disease, stroke, cancer and emphysema. At one time smoking seemed "cool," but it has become less and less desirable.

What's more, research shows that secondhand smoke, the smoke from other people's cigarettes, can harm the health of nonsmokers. Breathing in another person's smoke can cause asthma and other breathing problems in children, and cancer and heart disease in adults. The cancer can be anywhere in the body, not just the lungs,

The trend now is for public places and work places to go smoke-free. This should help smokers make the move to quit and keep everyone's lungs healthier.

Cigarettes are so much a part of the American scene that many people think of them as "normal." They are easy to buy and inexpensive compared to other drugs.

*But cigarettes aren't normal.* They are very addictive and cause sickness and death. They are illegal to use in many places and it is illegal for minors to buy them in most parts of the U.S.

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### WHAT ARE SOME TIPS FOR SMOKERS WHO DECIDE TO QUIT?

Join a stop-smoking program like Freedom From Smoking® from the American Lung Association (ALA). The Program gives quitters many tools to help them stay tobacco free. FFS teaches people to celebrate the experience of past quit attempts as a way to stay tobacco free. The groups provide support while each person shares and 'tries on' new ways of staying tobacco free.

Look into the different kinds of self-help options available to smokers. These include Freedom From Smoking® guidebooks, videotapes and audiotapes. All of these materials are also available from the American Lung Association.

Pick a time that's right for you to quit. Don't try to quit when you're under a lot of stress or around a holiday.

Be aware that smokers have different experiences when they quit. They may feel sleepy or very excited, lightheaded, nervous or irritable. Or they might crave tobacco or sweets or have headaches. These are signs of healing as the nicotine from cigarettes is leaving your body. Just as a sore itches when it is healing, these signs of healing are positive signs that you are working toward living a tobacco free life. Learning ways to cope differently can help.

Be sure to get some exercise every day. For example, walking is a great way to reduce the stress of quitting. Exercise is a big boost toward feeling better, improving spirits, and keeping trim. Exercise turns on the 'feel good' chemicals that your own brain makes. This helps to replace the 'good feelings' that the nicotine caused in your brain with a healthy way to feel better.

Get plenty of sleep, replace empty calories with food that is full of calories that nourish your body, and

drink lots of water.

Ask family, friends and co-workers to help. Having someone to take a walk with or just listen can give a needed boost. Don't hang out with people that nag, criticize you, or put you down.

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### **WHAT ABOUT SMOKERS WHO QUIT TIME AND TIME AGAIN?**

Most smokers need to "practice" quitting several times before they make it for good. The best advice is to keep trying! Practice helps smokers plan what to do the next time they get an urge to smoke.

Quitting smoking may seem almost impossible, but it can be done. Don't give up! Listen to stories of people who have finally quit for good after trying many times, on the Quitter In You® web site <http://www.quitterinyou.org/> . Many successful quitters have used past quit attempts as "practice quits" to help them learn what works best for them.

More than 45.7 million Americans have quit. Many of them tried several times before they were able to quit. They made it and quit for good. Other smokers can, too.

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### **WHAT ABOUT NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY? DOES IT HELP?**

Quitting smoking is a two-step process that includes:

- 1) overcoming the physical addiction to nicotine, and
- 2) breaking the smoking habit

Nicotine replacement therapy helps take care of the nicotine addiction so that the smoker can work on breaking the habit. Research has shown that smokers who use some form of nicotine replacement therapy, or other prescribed quit smoking medication, and participate in a behavior change program like *Freedom From Smoking*® can double their chances of quitting for good.

These products work best for people who are addicted to nicotine and are really trying to quit. Smokers can now obtain these nicotine replacement products both with a doctor's prescription and over-the-counter. These products are designed to reduce cravings for cigarettes and relieve the withdrawal symptoms people experience while trying to quit smoking.

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### **CAN NICOTINE CHEWING GUM HELP?**

Nicotine chewing gum releases small amounts of nicotine into the body. This cuts down on withdrawal symptoms and makes it easier to break the smoking addiction. Nicotine gum is available over-the-counter and the recommended treatment period is 12 weeks.

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### **HOW MUCH NICOTINE GUM DO QUITTERS CHEW?**

Usually 10 to 15 pieces of gum a day. Please follow package instructions to chew several times, then frequently 'park' the gum in your cheek. If you chew it like you would chew regular gum, it can cause

headache, dizziness, nausea or other effects of absorbing too much nicotine too fast. Drinks such as coffee or soda should be avoided before, during and after use of the gum. These liquids slow down the absorption of the nicotine from the gum.

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### **CAN THE NICOTINE PATCH HELP?**

The nicotine patch helps relieve nicotine withdrawal symptoms by providing a steady dosage of nicotine throughout the day. It reduces the craving or urges to smoke because it replaces the nicotine the smoker was used to getting from cigarettes.

Each day, a new patch is applied to the upper body. One patch is removed at night, lowering the level of nicotine in the bloodstream to give the body a rest; other brands are worn at night as well. These nicotine patches are now available over-the-counter and work best when used along with a behavioral change program like *Freedom From Smoking*® from the American Lung Association. Patches are available in either 6-week or 10-week treatment periods.

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### **ARE THESE NICOTINE REPLACEMENT PRODUCTS JUST AS BAD AS SMOKING CIGARETTES?**

No, they do not have all the tars and poisonous gases that are found in cigarettes. Furthermore, they provide less nicotine than a smoker gets from cigarettes.

These products should not be used by pregnant or nursing women. People with other medical conditions should check with their doctor before using any nicotine replacement product.

***Most important is that smokers quit completely before starting to use these products. They should not smoke any cigarettes while using the patch, gum or other nicotine replacement therapy.***

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### **ARE THERE OTHER NICOTINE REPLACEMENT PRODUCTS?**

Yes. There is an inhaler and a nasal spray that are available by prescription. A doctor should be contacted to discuss the use of these products and whether they are right for you.

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### **ARE THERE OTHER MEDICATIONS TO QUIT SMOKING?**

There is also a non-nicotine pill, bupropion hydrochloride or Zyban®, that was approved in 1997 to help smokers quit. The drug, only available by prescription, is also sold as an antidepressant under the name Wellbutrin®. Another 'prescription only' pill, varenicline or Chantix®, stops nicotine from entering the receptors in the brain, so the nicotine from a cigarette cannot affect you to make you feel good, as less depressed, less anxious, less bored, or less tired. If you and your doctor decide that Chantix® is right for you, be alert for any signs of depression. If you feel any symptoms of depression, go back to your Doctor to discuss how you are feeling. You may need a medication to take the place of the antidepressant effects of the nicotine, while you are learning to live tobacco free.

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## **WHAT'S A GOOD WAY TO HELP A CIGARETTE SMOKER QUIT?**

The first move has to come from the smoker. People who really want to quit smoking stand a better chance of sticking to their decision. Letting a person know you care and that you are "there for them" can be a big help.

Ask a smoker, "How can I help?" If the person can't come up with ideas right away, wait until you get some clues. Most smokers would like to be free of cigarettes.

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## **WHAT DO FORMER SMOKERS SAY ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF QUITTING?**

People who quit smoking are proud of themselves for breaking the addiction. By quitting, smokers get many health benefits. They cut down on their risk of having lung disease, a heart attack or getting cancer.

Former smokers are glad to be rid of cigarette stains on their fingers, hacking coughs and the smell of stale cigarette smoke on their clothing.

Other pleasing "side effects" of quitting are an improved sense of smell and taste.

Stopping smoking as early as possible is important, but cessation at any age provides meaningful life extensions.

Life expectancy among smokers who quit at age 35 exceeded that of continuing smokers by 6.9 to 8.5 years for men and 6.1 to 7.7 years for women. Smokers who quit at younger ages realize greater life extensions. However, even those who quit much later in life gained some benefits: among smokers who quit at age 55 years, men gained 1.4 to 2.0 year of life, and women gained 2.7 to 3.7 years.

The American Lung Association® now offers *Freedom From Smoking® Online* - a 24 hour smoking cessation support program on the web! Visit [www.ffsonline.org](http://www.ffsonline.org) and stop smoking today!

*Your local American Lung Association® can help with programs for smokers and for their families and friends. Give your local Lung Association a call today at 1-800-LUNG-USA. Ask about self-help guides, audiotapes, videotapes and group clinics.*

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