

## Smoking Cessation

Quitting smoking takes a lot of effort, but you can quit! Quitting smoking is one of the best choices you can make for your health.

### Good Reasons for Quitting:

- Your life will be healthier and you may live longer.
- You can benefit from quitting, even if you have smoked for many years.
- Your risk of heart attacks, cancer, and stroke will decrease.
- If you are pregnant, quitting smoking will improve your chances of delivering a healthy, full-term baby.
- Quitting smoking will improve the air quality of those around you and help keep them healthy.
- You will have extra money to spend on items other than cigarettes.

### The Stages of Change:

1. If you are in the precontemplation stage, you do not intend to change your addictive behavior within the next 6 months. While those around you, including family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, may be aware of your addiction to nicotine, you may be quite unaware of it. Unless you are pressured by those close to you, you are unlikely to make any permanent change.
2. If you are in the contemplative stage, you are aware that there is a problem and intend to take action within the next 6 months, but you have made no commitment to take action and eliminate your addiction. You may remain in this phase for a long time while you evaluate the difficulty of quitting smoking versus the positive aspects of continuing your addiction.
3. In the preparation stage, you intend to take action within 30 days and probably have unsuccessfully taken some action during the past year. You may have already begun to make small changes, such as decreasing the number of cigarettes you smoke each day.
4. In the action stage, you are actively changing your addictive behavior, experiences, or environment to break your addiction to nicotine. This stage requires a great deal of time and energy.
5. If you are in the maintenance stage of change, you are working hard to prevent any relapse. This stage can last from 6 months to an undetermined time.

### You Can Quit Smoking

If you are concerned that you may be addicted to nicotine and need help to break your addiction, your first step is to talk about it with a family member, a friend, or your health care provider. Your health care provider can give you support, work with you to develop new skills and behaviors, and provide medication to help you quit.

Of all the lifestyle factors that negatively influence your health, smoking is one of the most difficult to overcome. The important thing to do is take the first step!

## What is Nicotine Addiction?

Nicotine is an addictive drug. It causes changes in the brain that make people want to use it more and more. In addition, addictive drugs cause unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. The good feelings that result when an addictive drug is present - and the bad feelings when it's absent - make breaking any addiction very difficult. Nicotine addiction has historically been one of the hardest addictions to break. When a person smokes a cigarette, the body responds immediately to the chemical nicotine in the smoke.

## What Does Nicotine Do To The Body?

- Increases blood pressure
- Increases heart rate
- Increases the flow of blood from the heart
- Causes arteries to narrow

## When You Smoke, What Does Carbon Monoxide Do?

- Reduces the amount of oxygen the blood can carry
- Creates an imbalance between the demand for oxygen by the cells and the amount of oxygen the blood can supply
- Damages the inner walls of the arteries
- Causes the vessels to narrow and harden
- Causes changes in the clotting of the blood, making heart attack more likely

**Remember:** Smoking is the single leading cause of preventable deaths and disease in the United States.

## Smoking Cessation Resources

- American Lung Association - [lung.usa.org](http://lung.usa.org)
- Group Counseling: Clearing the Air - 215-710-2264
- Quit Now - 1-800-QUIT-NOW
- Determined to Quit - [determinedtoquit.com](http://determinedtoquit.com)

**Source:** [SmokeFree.gov](http://SmokeFree.gov)