

Quit smoking basics

Tobacco is a killer. Smokers and other tobacco users are more likely to develop disease and die earlier than are people who don't use tobacco. If you smoke, you may worry about what it's doing to your health. You probably worry, too, about how hard it might be to quit smoking. Nicotine is highly addictive, and to quit smoking — especially without help — can be difficult. In fact, most people don't succeed the first time they try to quit smoking. It may take more than one try, but you can stop smoking.

Take that first step: Decide to quit smoking. Set a stop date. And then take advantage of the multitude of resources available to help you successfully quit smoking.

Quit smoking action plan

Now that you've decided to quit smoking, it's time to map out your quit smoking action plan. One of the first steps of your quit smoking action plan should be "Get support."

Support can come from family, friends, your doctor, a counselor, a support group or a telephone quit line. Support can also come from use of one or more of the medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration for smoking cessation.

Another key step in your quit smoking action plan? Planning for challenges. For example, make a list of high-risk places you'll want to avoid when you start your quit-smoking plan. Think of other places to go where smoking isn't allowed, such as a shopping mall, a museum or movie theater.

Living smoke-free

What does living smoke-free mean? Living smoke-free is your opportunity to live a healthier and probably longer life. By the end of your first year, your risk of heart attack decreases by half. After 15 years, it's almost the same as someone who never smoked. Living smoke-free can also mean better quality of life — with more stamina and a better ability to appreciate tastes and smells.

But living smoke-free doesn't mean living stress-free. In fact, smokers often cite stress as a reason for relapsing. Instead of using nicotine to help cope with stress, you'll need to learn new ways to cope. Be proactive. You can find out more about stress management online or at the library. For more help, talk with your doctor or a mental health provider.