



# How Can I Quit Smoking?

Smoking is the most important preventable major risk factor for heart and blood vessel disease. Smoking also harms thousands of nonsmokers, including infants and children, who are exposed to second-hand smoke.

If you smoke, you have good reason to worry about its effect on your health, your loved ones and others. You could become one of the 443,000 smoking-related deaths every year. When you quit, you reduce that risk greatly!



## Is it too late to quit?

No matter how much or how long you've smoked, when you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop. In the year after you quit smoking, your excess risk of future coronary heart disease drops by 50 percent. After 15 years, your risk is as low as someone who has never smoked.

## How do I quit?

You are more likely to quit smoking for good if you prepare for two things: your last cigarette, and the cravings, urges and feelings that come with quitting. Think about quitting in 5 steps:

**1. Set a Quit Date.** Choose a date within the next seven days when you will quit smoking. Tell your family members and friends who are most likely to support your efforts.

**2. Choose a method for quitting.** There are three ways to quit smoking.

- Stop smoking all at once on your Quit Day.
- Reduce the number of cigarettes per day until you stop smoking completely.

- Smoke only part of your cigarette. If you use this method, you need to count how many puffs you take from each cigarette and reduce the number every 2 to 3 days.

**3. Decide if you need medicines or other help to quit.** Talk to your healthcare provider to discuss which medicine is best for you, and to get instructions about how to use it. These may include nicotine replacements (gum, spray, patch or inhaler) or prescription medicines such as bupropion hydrochloride or varenicline. You may also ask about referral to a smoking cessation program.

**4. Plan for your Quit Day.** Get rid of all cigarettes, matches, lighters, ashtrays from your house. Find healthy substitutes for smoking. Carry sugarless gum or mints. Munch carrots or celery sticks.

**5. Stop smoking on your Quit Day.**

## What if I smoke after quitting?

It's hard to stay a nonsmoker once you've had a cigarette, so do everything you can to avoid that "one." The urge to smoke will pass. The first 2 to 5 minutes will be the toughest. If you do smoke after quitting:

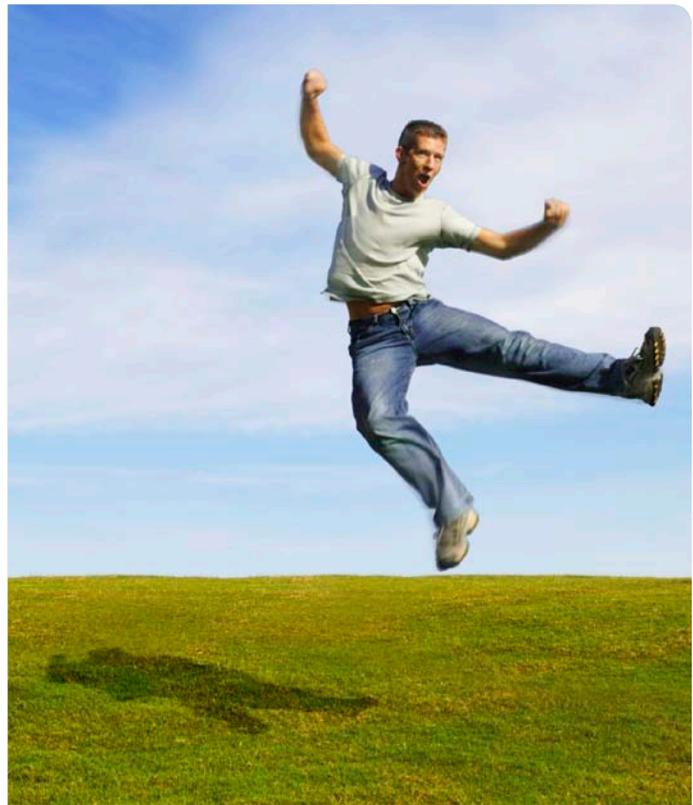
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- This doesn't mean you're a smoker again — do something now to get back on track.
- Don't punish or blame yourself — tell yourself you're still a nonsmoker.
- Think about why you smoked and decide what to do differently the next time.
- Sign a contract to stay a nonsmoker.

### What happens after I quit?

- Your senses of smell and taste come back.
- Your smoker's cough will go away.
- Your digestive system will return to normal.
- You'll breathe much easier.
- You'll be free from the mess, smell and burns in clothing.
- You'll increase your chances of living longer and have less chance of heart disease, stroke, lung disease and cancer.



## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease.
- 3** For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org**.

## Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**When will the urges stop?**

**How can I keep from gaining weight?**

## My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

**Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!**