

'Don't give up giving up' factsheet: Advice for giving up smoking

Stopping smoking is the greatest single step a person can take to improve their health. Once the daily intake of nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar and other poisons stops, the body can begin to repair the damage done by smoking. Alexia Patterson of the NHS Smoking Helpline has the following tips and advice, taking you through the process of quitting from start to finish.

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Top Ten Self-Help Tips for Giving Up:

1. Make plans for coping with stressful situations
2. Pick a quit date that will be stress-free and keep to it
3. Think positively – YOU can do it! Concentrate on the benefits
4. Take it one day at a time. Congratulate yourself each day
5. Ask a friend to stop too and give each other support
6. Use Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) or bupropion (Zyban) to help you manage the cravings
7. At first, avoid events where you may be tempted to smoke
8. Keep busy and get a bit more active
9. Count the money you save – spend it on yourself!
10. Don't try 'just one' cigarette – it always makes you start again

The Cycle of Stopping

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| Stage 1 | Thinking about stopping |
| Stage 2 | Preparing to stop - this is an important stage because, if you prepare well, you are much more likely to succeed |
| Stage 3 | Stopping – the quit date, when you exchange old habits for new ones |
| Stage 4 | Staying stopped – when you change your attitudes to smoking and your lifestyle |
| Stage 5 | Relapsing – this happens if you were not ready to stop or found the day-to-day reality different from what you'd expected. You haven't failed, so don't feel guilty. Each attempt gives you a valuable insight into stopping |

How Some People Stop Smoking

Cold turkey – the phrase “going cold turkey” means immediately stopping smoking. In other words, if you smoked a pack of cigarettes today, you are going “cold turkey” if, from tomorrow, you smoke none at all.

Cutting down – this means reducing the number of cigarettes you smoke over a period of time. Doing this over a long time can make the experience more difficult and this is not a recommended method. If you decide you want to try “cutting down”, make it work by setting a definite quit date, after which you do not light up again.

Other treatments – hypnosis, acupuncture and complementary therapies can and do help some people, but as yet there is no formal evidence that they are effective.

Planning For Your Quit Date

On the day you stop smoking, get ready to make changes in both the way you think and act. For example:

To remove temptations, I will:

- Choose a stress-free quit date
- Not buy or carry cigarettes
- Put away reminders like ashtrays, matches, lighters etc
- Avoid alcohol until I’m sure it won’t weaken my resolve

To get support for myself, I will:

- Talk to a friend/relative about why stopping is important to me
- Talk to an ex-smoker. Find out how they stopped. If they can, I can too!
- Team up with someone else for mutual support
- Call the NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 169 0 169
- Enrol on a course with my local NHS Stop Smoking Service

To change my thoughts about smoking, I will:

- Remember that “just one” cigarette will undo all my hard work
- Remind myself why I want to stop and the benefits to me
- Remember that I am the one in control
- Take each day as it comes

To cope with urges to smoke, I will:

- Remember that cravings pass quickly
- Stop and take some long, slow, deep breaths
- Drink a glass of water very slowly
- Read through my ideas of ways to cope
- Use NRT

During the first week, I will:

- Try taking a different way to work, college or the shops
- Keep busy, begin a project, or DIY job
- Go to non-smoking areas/venues
- Go outside for some fresh air each day

Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms (and how to beat them)

Withdrawal symptoms are the cause of many relapses. These symptoms are caused by nicotine leaving the body, and can be different for everyone. The good news is that they show your body is starting to repair itself.

Stopping smoking may be one of the most difficult tasks that you set yourself. To be successful, you will need to learn habits and coping strategies. At the same time as this, your body will go through some physical changes.

Be kind to yourself. There is no need to go through a period of "cold turkey". Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) or bupropion (Zyban) can help. Your local NHS Stop Smoking Service Adviser, doctor, nurse or pharmacist can advise which products are the most suitable for you – and don't forget to ask about getting these on prescription.

Symptoms	How it feels/the cause	How to cope
Cravings	An intense desire to smoke, which gets less over a few weeks. Your brain is missing the nicotine fix.	Do something different to distract yourself. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Drink a glass of water. Use NRT.
Coughing, dry mouth	Often gets worse at the beginning. Caused by the lungs clearing out the tar.	Warm drinks can ease the cough. Coughing shows the lungs are still recovering.
Hunger	Possibly intense. Caused by a change in your metabolism and food tasting better after stopping smoking.	Keep survival kit of fruit/vegetables. Chewing gum/cinnamon sticks. Drink lots of water.
Bowel changes	Possible constipation or diarrhoea.	It will settle. Drink fluids and gradually change your diet to include more fibre if constipated.
Trouble sleeping	Different sleep patterns, as nicotine leaves the body, can be insomnia or tiredness.	Settles over first 2-3 weeks. More physical activity, fresh air and less tea and coffee may help you sleep better.
Dizziness	Caused as more oxygen, instead of carbon monoxide, gets to your brain	Passes on it's own after a few days.
Mood swings, inability to concentrate, feeling irritable.	Caused by the withdrawal of nicotine. Missing the habit and comfort of smoking.	Find different coping methods. Warn family and friends and ask for support. Don't let them buy you cigarettes.

NRT and Zyban explained

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is a method of giving your body nicotine without the harmful effects of smoking or chewing tobacco. The basic idea is to gradually reduce the body's addiction by using a low nicotine dose to take the edge off the cravings and have a 'soft landing'. NRT is therefore an effective way of helping you manage your withdrawal symptoms. In fact, research shows that using NRT doubles your chances of successfully stopping smoking.

There are lots of different types of NRT products available and different kinds will suit different lifestyles. Follow the instructions on the packet and ask your local NHS Stop Smoking adviser, doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist if there's anything you're not sure about. NRT is available on prescription as well as in shops, supermarkets and over the counter in pharmacies.

Nicotine gum allows you to control your nicotine dose. The idea is to chew gently until you get the flavour and then 'park' the gum in your cheek so that nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth. A chew-rest-chew technique is best, because any nicotine you swallow is wasted.

Nicotine patches These work by releasing a steady dose of nicotine into the bloodstream. Some are intended to be worn during the day only, but if you suffer from early morning cravings, you may find the 24-hour patches suit you better – although it can disturb your sleep. Move the patch site daily to avoid skin irritation.

Microtabs and lozenges One of the most discreet forms of NRT, these work by being absorbed into the lining of the mouth. The microtab is a small tablet that dissolves under your tongue – do not suck, chew or swallow the microtab as this will reduce the amount of nicotine you get. The lozenge is larger and is like a sweet that you suck slowly.

Nicotine nasal spray The strongest NRT available. The nicotine gets into your body through the lining of your nose. Nicotine taken this way is absorbed fast, so nasal sprays are especially suited to people who have a high nicotine dependence or who are experiencing severe withdrawal symptoms. The spray can irritate the nose at first, but this quickly passes.

Inhalators A plastic cigarette-shaped device with a nicotine cartridge. Sucking on the mouthpiece releases nicotine vapour which is absorbed through your mouth and throat. Useful if you miss the hand-to-mouth action of smoking.

Zyban (bupropion hydrochloride) is an alternative to NRT and is only available on prescription. It works by suppressing the part of the brain that gives the smoker a nicotine 'buzz' when smoking a cigarette. The smoker starts taking Zyban before giving up, and the drug puts them off cigarettes because they no longer get the 'hit'. It reduces the cravings as well as the usual withdrawal symptoms of anxiety, sweating and irritability. A course lasts two months, and you should be prepared to stop smoking during the second week of the course.

Although proven to be effective, as with all drugs there is a risk of side effects and you will need to discuss with your doctor whether this form of therapy would be suitable for you. Like NRT, Zyban works well as part of an overall NHS Stop Smoking Service support programme.

Which method you choose will depend upon many things, including how nicotine dependent you are. One of the easiest ways to find out is to visit the Nicotine Dependency Calculator at www.givingupsmoking.co.uk.

Worried About Putting On Weight?

Some people put off the decision to quit smoking because they worry about weight gain, but in average the increase after a year is quite small. It's also worth bearing in mind that, although smokers do tend to be thinner than non-smokers, the effect of smoking causes smokers to store fat in an abnormal distribution. Smokers are more likely to store fat around the waist and upper torso, rather than around the hips, which has a negative impact on their body shape.

The main reasons that people put on weight are because:

- Nicotine suppresses your natural appetite and "ups" your body's metabolism
- When you stop smoking, your appetite can increase
- Many people find that food is tastier, so eat more when they stop smoking
- People replace cigarettes with snacks and sweets, or change their normal diet

To avoid putting on weight:

- Keep a close watch on what you eat
- Try having less high calorie foods and avoid fried food
- If possible, be more active
- When you first stop, try to start a healthy eating programme

Trying again to stop?

It often takes practice to give up smoking. Researchers have found that the more past attempts to stop smoking a person has made, the more likely they will be to stop smoking in the future. The experience from any previous attempts to stop will help you know what works for you and what you need to do differently this time.

The most common reasons people give for returning to smoking are:

- They were unaware of their smoking "triggers" and got caught out
- They did not plan a programme to help them stop
- They didn't sort out alternative ways to handle stress
- They thought they could get away with having "just one"
- They hit a bad patch or a pressurised day
- They found it difficult to manage weight gain
- They thought of themselves as smokers, not non-smokers

Emergency Advice – if you have just had a cigarette

1. Make a decision to stop again immediately
2. Throw away any remaining cigarettes
3. Call a friend or the NHS Smoking Helpline 0800 169 0 169
4. Change your surroundings, if possible leave the situation
5. Remember why you wanted to give up smoking
6. Try to handle the situation without another cigarette
7. Keep repeating "I can choose not to smoke"

For further information

In Great Britain, an estimated 10 million people have now stopped smoking.

The main reasons smokers gave for wanting to stop were:

- To improve their health
- To save money/reduce their cost of living
- Concerns about the effects of passive smoke on their family/children

Stopping smoking is the single best thing you can do to improve your health and life expectancy.

For advice on giving up, try www.givingupsmoking.co.uk

NHS Smoking Helpline – 0800 169 0 169
Textphone 0800 169 0 171

This friendly service can provide you with advice and support on stopping, and information pack and the details of your local NHS Stop Smoking Service. You can also get details of your local NHS Stop Smoking Service by texting GIVE UP and your full postcode to 88088.

Your local NHS Stop Smoking Service provides a range of free services to help you stop smoking, including one-to-one and group support.

NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline – 0800 169 9 169

Most people know that smoking damages their health, but smoking during pregnancy can seriously increase the risk of many problems for women and their babies

Call this number for more information, help and advice on stopping smoking during pregnancy. You will find a friendly person ready to help you.

NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline

0800 169 0 881 Urdu
0800 169 0 882 Punjabi
0800 169 0 883 Hindi
0800 169 0 884 Gujarati
0800 169 0 885 Bengali

Call the NHS Asian Tobacco Helpline for confidential advice and tips on giving up smoking or chewing tobacco and/or tobacco paan.

You can also order a free comprehensive booklet in the languages above packed with lots of helpful advice on how to give up tobacco, as well as find out details of your local smoking/tobacco cessation support group.

Your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist can also help. Make an appointment to discuss your smoking and any concerns you may have. They can tell you which of the products that help reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms are suitable for you. NRT products and Zyban are available on prescription.