



## Pick Your Path to Health

### Quit Smoking the Healthy Way

Perhaps you've been smoking since you were a teenager-lighting up with the crowd to look cool. But now you know it's not so cool to be hooked, and you're ready and willing to give it up. So how can you kick the habit?

Try one day at a time.

You know you have good reasons to quit. Here are three big ones.

- **You can live longer.** About half of all smokers die from diseases caused by smoking. And, of these, half die in middle age, losing an average of 20 to 25 years of life expectancy.
- **You can be healthier.** About 45,000 African Americans die each year from a preventable smoking-related disease, such as heart disease, cancer and stroke. You don't want to be in that number. Smoking also damages a woman's reproductive health, is associated with reduced fertility and early menopause, and can harm her unborn baby.
- **You can protect your children and other adults.** Secondhand smoke can cause lung cancer and heart disease in adults who don't smoke. Children who breathe secondhand smoke are at risk for conditions such as pneumonia and bronchitis as well as an increase in the number or severity of asthma attacks.

All of these are reason enough to quit. So let's get to it!

The only safe choice is to totally kick the habit. Smoking even a few cigarettes a day can hurt your health. If you try to smoke fewer cigarettes, but do not stop completely, soon you'll be smoking the same amount again. Smoking "low-tar, low-nicotine" cigarettes doesn't help, either. Because nicotine is so addictive, if you switch to lower-nicotine brands you'll likely just puff harder, longer, and more often on each cigarette. You can start by setting a quit date, toss out those cigarettes and ashtrays and stick to your commitment with all your might. Ron Todd, director of tobacco control for the American Cancer Society, says some people try hypnosis and acupuncture to help them-different things work for different folks. But if you're looking for some general guidance, here are 10 tips from the U.S. Surgeon General and the National Cancer Institute to ease the way:

- Tell your friends and family that you're quitting so you get their support. Ask them not to tempt you by smoking around you.
- Change your routine by doing simple things such as drinking herbal tea instead of coffee or taking public transportation to work instead of driving.
- Reduce your stress. This is especially important with everything going on in the country these days. Take time to exercise, stretch, or try deep breathing.
- Instead of reaching for a cigarette, nibble on carrots, celery, apples, and other fruits and vegetables. Or chomp on sugarless gum or air-popped popcorn. Get organized and have things prepared in advance.
- Do things that require you to use your hands. Take up needlework, crossword puzzles, gardening, or walking the dog. Write letters or wash the car.
- Consider nicotine replacement products to help lessen the urge to smoke. The choices include gum, patches, inhalers, and nasal sprays. It's a good idea to talk to your physician and read instructions carefully before using these products, Todd says.
- Drink a lot of water and fruit juices.
- Brush your teeth frequently, use mouthwash and enjoy having a clean-mouth taste.
- Light incense or a candle instead of a cigarette.
- Avoid alcohol and being around other smokers.

Some folks replace smoking with eating and in turn put on a few pounds. "But the weight gain is temporary and not that much once they get over the withdrawal hump," Todd says. "It's better to gain a few pounds than to continue smoking."

If you fail to quit the first time, try again! "Most people try several times before they succeed in quitting," Todd says. So don't give up. For more support, get a group of smokers to join you on November 15 for the American Cancer Society's 25th annual Great American Smokeout, a day to go smoke-free and give up the smokes.

"The important thing is to quit as soon as you can and stay quit," Todd says.

For more information on smoking and how to quit, contact:

- National Women's Health Information Center, 1-800-994-WOMAN; <http://www.4woman.gov/QuitSmoking/index.cfm>

- American Heart Association, 800-242-8721;  
[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)
- American Cancer Society, 800-ACS-2345;  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- American Lung Association, 800-LUNG-USA;  
[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)
- National Cancer Institute, 800-4-CANCER;  
[www.nci.nih.gov](http://www.nci.nih.gov)
- Office of the U.S. Surgeon General,  
[www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco)
- Office on Smoking and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 404-488-5705;  
[www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco).

Fighting tobacco addiction to improve your overall health is a worthwhile battle. Start today on your path to better health.

*Pick Your Path to Health is a national public health campaign sponsored by the Office on Women's Health within the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services. For more information about the campaign or to subscribe to the listserv to receive tips on improving your health, call 1-800-994-WOMAN or TDD at 1-888-220-5446 or visit the National Women's Health Information Center at <http://www.4woman.gov>. This article was developed through a partnership between the Office on Women's Health and the Wellness Warriors Network.*