



# How Can I Quit Smoking?

Smoking harms almost every tissue and organ in the body, including your heart and blood vessels. Smoking also harms nonsmokers 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. Deciding to quit is a big step, and following through is just as important. Quitting smoking isn't easy, but others have done it, and you can too.



## 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 coronary heart disease drops by 50 percent. After 15 years, your risk is as low as someone who has never smoked. While you may crave a cigarette after quitting, most people feel that quitting is the most positive thing they've ever done for themselves.

## How do I quit?

It's never too late to 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 five 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 several ways to quit smoking. Some include:

- 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 two to three 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. Go for walks. Carry sugarless gum or mints. Munch carrots or celery sticks.

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

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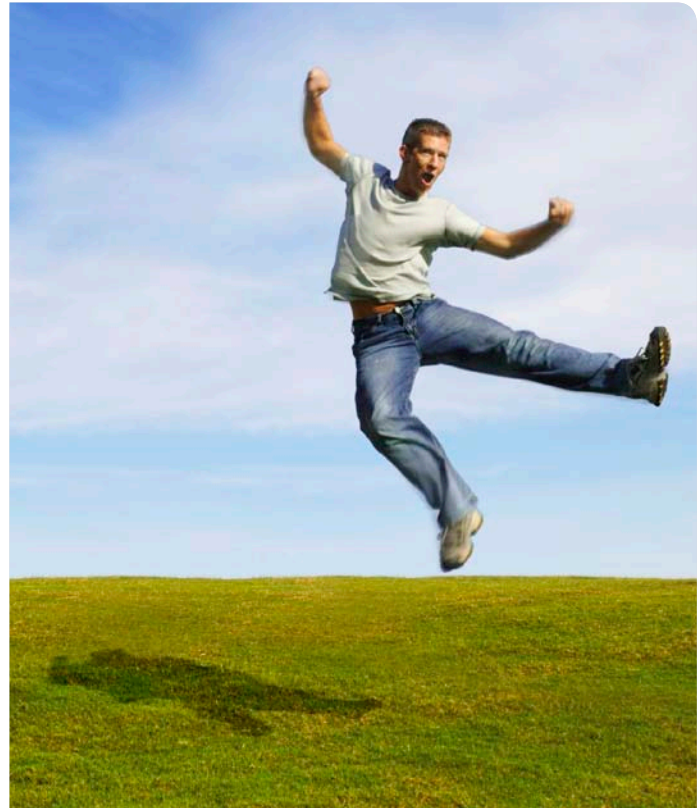
### What if I smoke after quitting?

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 two to five minutes will be the toughest. If you do smoke after quitting:

- 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.
- 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 reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.



### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

### 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.