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Quit Smoking Today: Top Tips for Beating the Habit

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Quit Smoking Today: Top Tips for Beating the Habit

How to Quit Smoking for Yourself

Thousands of people are addicted to smoking, and, every day, thousands of people fight the battle of breaking this addiction. But, how can someone go about successfully quitting smoking? There are many reasons to quit, but the most important reason is for your self.

Quitting for Others

Many people trying to quit smoking are doing so in order to make others happy. They try to quit so their spouse will quit nagging. They try to stop because their job frowns upon smoking. They try to put out the cigarette because society has made smoking unacceptable. They try to quit because their kids look at them with big, puppy dog eyes and plead with them to stop. While it is great to have family and friends around you who care and who want to see you stay around awhile longer than you will if you continue smoking, the only reason that will truly motivate you is if you quit for yourself.

Sure, pleasing those around you may get you to start on the road toward recovery from nicotine addiction. You might tell yourself, "I'm doing it for my kids. I don't want them to see me go through cancer." Or, you might think, "If I quit smoking, my spouse might finally just leave me alone about it." While these thoughts may get you initially motivated to quit smoking, they won't help you sustain a cigarette free life.

In fact, quitting for others might just help you make excuses to start back up again. For example, you might quit for your spouse, and then when you have a disagreement about something, you might say, "I'll show him (or her)." Next thing you know, you're lighting up. You may not think you would do that, but we do strange things when we're upset – even destroy our own bodies.

Why You Should Quit for Yourself

There are plenty of reasons you should quit for yourself. A couple of them even do tie into quitting for others, but with a slightly different slant. For example, you might quit because of your kids, but not for them. By this I mean that you might want to quit so you can enjoy spending more years with them, rather than because you don't want to see them get hurt by your early death. This may sound selfish, but you have to think about yourself when you are trying to quit. You have to convince yourself there are many reasons to quit that will benefit you personally.

Of course, there are the obvious health benefits involved with quitting. If you quit, you put years back onto your life. This is because you have now effectively reduced your chances of developing high blood pressure, heart disease, throat cancer, lung cancer, and emphysema. You have also lessened your likelihood of having a heart attack and of developing gum disease

and ulcers, just to name a few.

If you aren't feeling too concerned about the inside of your body, consider the outside. Smoking makes your fingers and teeth yellow, not to mention the bad smell. Of course, you probably don't realize just how bad it smells because your sense of taste and smell have both been dulled by smoking! Fortunately, quitting will help bring back these small joys of life.

In addition, smoking makes your skin wrinkle faster, particularly on your face. Not only that, the notion that smoking makes a person look "cool" has been gone for a long time. In fact, the majority of people are less attracted to people who smoke than the other way around.

Of course, there are also the financial rewards of quitting smoking. Most smokers will save literally thousands of dollars every year by simply quitting smoking. Just imagine all of the things you can do for you if you quit. Perhaps you have seen some new outfits or shoes you would like to buy at the end of a year of successfully not smoking. Maybe you can purchase a new entertainment center, or buy that new transmission for your project car. Perhaps you can take that vacation you have always wanted to take. If you managed to win the battle against this addiction, go ahead and spoil yourself – you deserve it! Consider it a celebration of saving your own life.

Have a Plan to Quit Smoking and Stick to It

If you have decided to quit smoking, then an important step is making a plan that you can follow through with. This will ensure that you will be successful in your desire to break the habit of smoking. One of the reasons why several go back to smoking is because of the withdrawal symptoms that follow after one has decided to quit.

The nicotine and chemicals that are in cigarettes trigger a nerve in your brain that makes you feel relaxed when your body is in pain. This eventually becomes an addiction that you have to learn to fight off in order to stop smoking. You can overcome the problems of addiction and withdrawal by having a plan to quit smoking and allowing yourself to carry it out. By sticking to a plan, and laying a foundation for yourself to quit smoking, you will be able to succeed with your goal to quit smoking.

The first thing to do when you decide to quit smoking is to create a list of reasons why you have decided to quit. This may be health related or may be a response to relationships that you have. Once you start to change your mind about why you are smoking and the things that are associated with smoking, it will make it easier for you to take the next steps. Make sure to keep this list at hand for times when the withdrawal is trying to move you back into smoking. This list can be of health reasons, as well as mental and social reasons to help you quit.

The next step to take is to further your knowledge on what smoking causes and how you can stop. This will allow you to set everything in place so that it will be easier for you to stop and stick to your plans. Books and consistent information about smoking is one of the ways in which this will help. Developing a support group around you through friends and family is another way to stop your addiction. One of the support groups that you can use is with a

physician to get a physical. Let them know that you are going to quit smoking, and ask what can be used to help regain your strength. A third resource you can use is by creating your own support by starting a quit journal. These will be consistent reminders for you to stop smoking.

The most important part of the plan is to find the right date to quit smoking. Usually, this should be done within the next two weeks after you have decided to quit. The day can be decided by finding a time when you will have little stress around you as well as a day when there are not any obligations to fulfill. This will give your body time to adjust to the change and will give you room to relax and let the changes begin to take place.

After you have decided the day that you are going to quit smoking, you can continue to prepare and change your environment and habits in order to help support your habit to quit. Changing your diet, getting supplemental vitamins, and creating spaces that will help you to relax will all help fight off the cravings that you will have to go back to smoking. You can also begin to substitute cigarettes for things such as candy and gum in order to help you to get to stop.

One of the things to keep in mind when you are carrying out with your plans to quit smoking is keeping a positive attitude when you are quitting. Feelings of doubt and negativity may begin to sink in as the withdrawal symptoms take place. Having different tools in place to replace these feelings will help you to move past your smoking habit at a quicker pace. Including things such as rewards for making it through a day without smoking will help replace the negative thoughts with different positive thoughts.

The road to quit smoking is to plan out a different and healthier lifestyle. By making a conscious effort with physical changes, as well as developing different mental attitudes, you will be able to fight off your urges for smoking and will be able to remain smoke free.

Seven Symptoms to Tough Out When You Quit Smoking

When you quit smoking, you will begin to experience symptoms of nicotine withdrawal shortly after quitting. These nicotine withdrawal symptoms can be very intense, causing many individuals to succumb to the urge to smoke. Smoking cessation can be facilitated much easier if you know what to look out for. Identifying the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal will help you overcome them much easier. Here are seven symptoms to tough out when you quit smoking.

1) Intense cravings to smoke. Perhaps the most irritating symptom of nicotine withdrawal is the intense desire to reach for the lighter. There are several things you can do to resist these intense cravings. First, try to alter your daily routine to avoid boredom and prolonged periods of inactivity. When you are bored, you are more likely to want to smoke. Whenever you feel the desire to smoke, consider the practice of deep breathing, and other relaxation techniques.

You should also strive to keep your hands busy. Knit, play checkers, do a jigsaw puzzle—keeping your hands busy will compensate for your smoking habit. Finally, speak to your medical professional about using smoking cessation aids such as gum, the patch, or a nicotine inhaler. These can be valuable tools for toughing out those strong cravings.

2) Fatigue and insomnia. Most smokers experience an overall feeling of sluggishness during the first two weeks after stopping. Before you quit smoking, give yourself permission to take it easy for at least two periods after you quit. Don't take on any extra assignment at work, and avoid making too many commitments during your time off. Avoid stress, especially at night before going to bed. Take long hot baths, watch only light comedies, and avoid excessive use of caffeine and sugar.

Even though you may be feeling especially sluggish, it's also important that you get your body moving. Find an outdoor activity that you enjoy, such as biking or gardening. Doing some sort of regular physical activity will help counter your fatigue, and will help keep you distracted from the urge to smoke.

3) Irritability and depression. Many a smoker has been accused of being cranky during the period of nicotine withdrawal. It makes perfect sense that you're feeling irritable or a bit depressed during this period. Nicotine is a powerful chemical that stimulates the pleasure centers in your brain. When the nicotine suddenly stops, you are bound to feel a little unglued.

The best way to counter feelings of irritability and depression is to be prepared for them. Give yourself permission to feel a little upset. Cheer yourself up by watching comedies, reading light fare, and eating healthy foods. Make an effort to treat yourself to fresh flowers, a good meal, music, or whatever you think will cheer you up. Use food as a reward sparingly, since this may lead to unwanted weight gain.

4) Headaches. It is not unusual for smokers to experience mild to severe headaches during the process of quitting. Treat mild headaches by avoiding stress, taking over the counter Ibuprofen or Tylenol, and getting plenty of sleep. If your headaches are persistent and severe, visit your physician.

5) Hunger and increased caloric intake. Many smokers experience hunger pangs and an overall increase in appetite. This is not unusual since many smokers are accustomed to using cigarettes as meal replacements. To avoid stressing your body and gaining weight, surround yourself with healthy, whole foods that you can munch on, instead of reaching for the cigarettes. Have veggies chopped and ready to eat in your refrigerator. Buy fresh fruit and drink lots of water. Carry granola bars, apples, and trail mix with you in case hunger should strike outside your home.

6) Difficulty with concentrating. Quitting smoking can create an overall sense of restlessness that makes it difficult to concentrate on the task at hand. Instead of trying to fight through your lack of concentration, take a break. Go for a walk, have a piece of fruit, then return to your work refreshed.

7) Dry mouth and sore gums. As you may imagine, your mouth needs to readjust to not smoking, too. Used to sucking on cigarettes, the mouth may experience dryness or soreness shortly after quitting. Counter these unpleasant effects by keeping your mouth hydrated. Drink plenty of fresh water and avoid overly salty or sweet foods.

Gums, Patches, Hypnosis – Various Methods to Help You Quit Smoking

If you are a smoker, you have undoubtedly tried several times to quit the habit. But, for some, this struggle seems to be a little more difficult than for others. Fortunately, there are a variety of methods available to help you win the fight. The important part is finding the one that is right for you.

Using Gum to Quit Smoking

Nicotine gum is a form of nicotine replacement that works quickly by getting into the bloodstream through the mucous membrane in your mouth. It can be purchased without a prescription and comes in strengths of 2 mg and 4 mg.

It is important when using nicotine gum to follow the included directions carefully. You should chew the gum until you notice a peppery taste, and then let it set against your cheek for a while. You should alternate between chewing it and putting it against your cheek for about 20-30 minutes. Certain foods and drinks, however, can affect how well the nicotine is absorbed by your system. Therefore, you should avoid eating certain foods and drinks that are acidic, such as juices, coffee, and soft drinks, for 15 minutes before and after you use the nicotine gum.

If you are a heavy smoker who smokes a pack or more per day, if you smoke within 30 minutes after getting up, or if you have trouble refraining from smoking in areas where it is restricted, you should probably start with 4 mg. You should not, however, use more than 20 pieces of nicotine gum per day. In addition, you should only use nicotine gum for 1 to 3 months and for no longer than 6 months. You should work toward gradually decreasing the amount of gum you chew.

People with sensitive skin often prefer gum over a nicotine patch. Gum also allows you to better control the amount of nicotine you ingest when compared to the patch. This is because you only chew the gum when you need it or you can create a fixed schedule every day. In fact, recent data has shown that scheduled doses of nicotine gum are more effective than using it "as needed."

Possible side effects of nicotine gum include: throat irritation, bad taste, hiccups, mouth ulcers, jaw discomfort, nausea, and a racing heartbeat. Problems with the jaw and stomach are usually caused by using the gum improperly, such as chewing too rapidly or swallowing nicotine.

Using the Patch to Quit Smoking

A nicotine patch will provide you with small measured doses of nicotine through your skin throughout the day. Switching to different patches over time gradually lowers the doses, until you are finally weaned from nicotine. Nicotine patches can be purchased without a prescription and there are several different strengths available.

The 16-hour patch is recommended for those who are light to medium smokers. This patch is less likely to cause side effects such as sleep problems, a racing heartbeat, headache, and skin irritation. This patch does not, however, deliver nicotine during the night. Therefore, it will not

help you with withdrawal symptoms early in the morning.

The 24-hour patch also provides a steady dose of nicotine at all times, thereby helping with morning withdrawal symptoms. More side effects, however, are associated with the 24-hour patch, such as skin irritation and disrupted sleep patterns.

Most smokers start with the full-strength patch, which delivers 15 to 22 mg of nicotine, for four weeks. They then move to a weaker patch of 5 to 14 mg for another four weeks. The patch itself is applied in the morning to a dry, clean area on the body that does not contain much hair. The location should be below the neck, but above the waist. While the FDA has recommended using the patch for 3-5 months, some studies have shown 8 weeks to be just as effective.

Side effects of the patch are often caused by the brand of the patch, the dose of nicotine, skin sensitivity, how the patch is applied, and how long the patch is used. Common side effects associated with the nicotine patch include dizziness, skin irritation, racing heartbeat, headache, sleep problems, vomiting, nausea, muscle aches and stiffness. If any of these occur, you should try switching to a different brand, using a lower dose patch, or using a different form of nicotine replacement. If you are having problems sleeping, give it a few days to see if it improves. If not, switch to a lower dosage.

Using Hypnosis to Quit Smoking

Hypnosis is a form of therapy during which a trained hypnotherapist puts you into a trancelike state. While in this state, you are more open to suggestion. Sometimes, hypnosis is done in addition to other remedies you may be utilizing, but it can also be used alone. On occasion, this form of treatment can be effective in as little as one session.

There are no potential side effects of hypnosis. There is, however, very little research proving if it really works or why it works. Critics of this form of therapy say the hypnosis itself doesn't work; rather it is the patient's strong belief in the system that makes it effective. But, of course, it really doesn't matter why it works if it does help you stop smoking.

How to Make Nicotine Replacement Therapy Work for You

Smokers trying to kick the habit are willing to try just about anything to beat the addiction. Of the many options out there, the one most frequently sought is that of nicotine replacement therapy. But understanding nicotine replacement therapy, its different forms, and how to use it properly is essential to its success.

Why is Nicotine Replacement Therapy?

Nicotine replacement therapy is the most commonly used medical approach in smoking cessation. It is intended to help ease the withdrawal of nicotine by temporarily providing the drug by a means other than cigarettes. As a result, nicotine replacement therapy helps reduce physical withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, sleep difficulty, restlessness, and headaches.

As a result of the assistance nicotine replacement therapy provides with coping with the physical symptoms, the smoker is better able to deal with the psychological symptoms of cigarette withdrawal, such as an oral fixation or breaking the “habit” of smoking in response to specific triggers.

Nicotine replacement therapy is considered to be a safe means for quitting smoking. There are, however, certain side effects that some people experience, such as sinusitis, irritability, palpitations, and breathing problems. In addition, pregnant women and those with endocrine, heart, or circulatory problems may experience other complications. Any individuals falling within these categories should be carefully evaluated and tested by a doctor before beginning any form of nicotine replacement therapy.

Type of Nicotine Replacement Therapy

There are several forms of nicotine replacement therapy currently available. Nicotine gum is the oldest type of nicotine replacement therapy and it can be purchased over the counter. Nicotine inhalers, which are similar to the inhalers used by asthmatics, are another form of nicotine replacement therapy. This form of therapy is available only through prescription. The nicotine patch, which is available over the counter and by prescription, is placed on the skin to provide a constant flow of nicotine. The easy to use nicotine nasal spray, which is only available by prescription, is another option for nicotine replacement therapy.

How to Use Nicotine Gum

When using nicotine gum, you need to periodically place the gum between your gums and your cheek in order to let the nicotine get into your bloodstream. It is important to keep from swallowing the nicotine because it results in far less getting into your bloodstream and it can also cause gastrointestinal problems.

If you are a heavy smoker, which means you smoke more than 25 cigarettes per day, you should use the 4 mg strength. A smaller 2 mg dose is recommended for lighter smokers. Even if you do smoke less than 25 cigarettes, however, you might find it necessary to use the stronger dose at first in order to wean yourself down to the lower dosage. When using nicotine gum, you should avoid acidic beverages such as tea, coffee, and fruit juice because they interfere with the nicotine absorption.

How to Use a Nicotine Inhaler

Nicotine inhalers provide a small amount of nicotine with every puff. This makes it necessary to use the inhaler frequently. For some people who are trying to smoke, this is an advantage because it gives them something to do with their hands. The effectiveness of nicotine inhalers, however, decreases in temperatures of 50 degrees or less. It is necessary to avoid acidic beverages in order to obtain the full effect.

How to Use a Nicotine Patch

Nicotine patches are available in both 16-hour and 24-hour dosages. Most commonly, light

smokers use the 16-hour version while heavy smokers use the 24-hour patch. Those who have trouble sleeping when using the 24-hour patch also choose to use the 16-hour patch because it is not intended to provide nicotine during the night. Some brands of nicotine patches offer varying strengths of nicotine, as well. This allows you to taper off the amount of nicotine you use in your nicotine replacement therapy.

Some people experience skin irritation from the patch. If this happens to you, you should look at using a lower strength or changing from the 24-hour patch to the 16-hour patch. If this doesn't help, you might also switch brands. If you are unable to resolve the skin irritation and it is very problematic, you should look into one of the other forms of nicotine replacement therapy.

How to Use Nasal Spray

Nasal spray nicotine replacement therapy provides immediate relief from cravings. Some individuals, however, experience side effects such as coughing, sneezing, and runny nose.

No matter which form of nicotine replacement therapy you choose, it is important to also participate in counseling or other methods for dealing with the psychological aspects of cigarette addiction. Nicotine replacement therapy should not be considered the "cure all" for smoking cessation.

Popular Herbal Remedies to Quit Smoking – Do They Work?

Smoking is not only a filthy habit, but will most likely kill you. Many a smoker has heard this for years and so it is not surprising that at the top of the list of New Year's resolutions for smokers is the earnest desire to finally get rid of the addiction that is ruling their lives. Many smokers will admit that they hate their addiction, yet they do so while in the same breath lighting up another cigarette or stuffing more of that chewing tobacco into their mouths.

Of course, getting rid of an addiction is easier said than done, and so it is not surprising that many companies offer a panacea that is supposed to cure the unhappy smoker once and for all. How many of you have opened your e-mail only to find dozens of spam messages that talk of herbal remedies to quit smoking. Do any of them work?

The list of herbal remedies that seek to aid the earnest nicotine quitter is quite extensive. For example, there is an herbal patch, which is issued similarly to the nicotine patches available at the grocery store checkout counter. Of course, instead of nicotine, the substance you are actually trying to give up, it contains a wide variety of herbal ingredients that seek to mimic the effect the drug has on the body, while at the same time acting as a detoxifying agent.

Hops, skullcap and oat are the main ingredients that are used to curb the cravings that come with the nicotine withdrawal. The manufacturer cites unnamed researchers that speak of the effectiveness of the patch, and also claims that most people will succeed with this patch. Unfortunately, there is no tangible evidence that this patch will work, no empirical studies that are cited, and no research materials that may be perused at a smoker's leisure.

Another herbal remedy is a three-step set that seeks to help the smoker to get a grip on the physical urges to smoke, help the body to get rid of the nicotine toxin, and also includes aromatherapy to finish the treatment process. Granted, there is no medical study to back up the manufacturer's claim, but the company does refer to one of the ingredients' being used in India to treat opium addiction. Unfortunately, there is not proof referenced with this statement.

Yet another product is a little spray bottle that is said to deliver the herbal anti-smoking remedy directly under the tongue of the individual. Its goals are to relieve the cravings as well as the anxiety and general irritability that go hand in hand with quitting attempts. In addition to the foregoing, the spray seeks to relieve shortness of breath and other related symptoms. What is, perhaps, a bit surprising that the spray is expressly mentioning the dose to use on children aged two to six. It is a bit astonishing to see an anti-smoking spray marketed to someone that young.

Medical studies on some websites are cited as saying that herbal supplements cannot repair the bodily damage that smokers are inflicting on themselves every day. Who is correct? Unfortunately, it appears that success is in the eye of the beholder, who is the patient. Since the statements made by the herbal remedy manufacturers are quite often not endorsed by the Food and Drug Administration, their statements must be taken at face value, and there are quite possibly some individuals who will use the herbal remedy and have a stunning success with it.

Conversely, there will also be some who will follow the manufacturer's guidelines to the letter only to find themselves still addicted at the end of the time period the remedy specifies. Rather than believing obscure or hard to verify facts, it is best to discuss any remedy, herbal or otherwise, with your physician. It will not hurt to have her or him look over the list of ingredients to see if they will work well together, or if they perhaps will be detrimental to any medications you are currently taking. Yet, no matter what remedy a smoker may choose to kick the habit, any effort is better than no attempt at all, and an herbal remedy may quite possibly be your ticket of escape from a life of addiction and bodily destruction.

Quit Smoking and Get Rich!

If you are thinking about quitting your smoking habit, you probably have a variety of good reasons. You know that the nicotine is staining your fingernails and skins with an unhealthy yellow color that not even fingernail polish can successfully cover up. You know that smoking causes fine lines around the mouth that may look quite unattractive with advancing age. You know that smoking will stain your teeth and also contribute to the development of gum disease. Of course, you most certainly know about the cancer risks that smoking causes you as well as your loved ones around you. Yet, did you also know that if you quit smoking you might get rich?

It's the truth! Follow along and be amazed!

A smoker may smoke one pack of cigarettes per day. Let's assume that the trip to the store (gas, etc.), the purchasing of a brand name package of cigarettes, as well as the applicable

sales tax make this little excursion cost \$5.

Let's assume that the smoker will not increase her or his habit, but instead remain steady at one package of cigarettes per day for an entire year. Therefore, let's multiply \$5 by 365 days. The result is a staggering \$1,825 per year. If you were to average this over a 12-month period, you will have a savings of about \$152 per month.

If you were to invest this money in an investment savings account with a six percent annual return, and if you were to continue annually adding to this account \$1,825, in thirty years your investment could total \$66,621!

Still not convinced? Imagine the savings of a heavy smoker with a two pack a day habit. \$10 per day for 365 days adds up to an amazing \$3,650. Invest this amount annually for thirty years in an interest bearing investment account with a six percent yield, and in thirty years you will have saved a staggering \$133,241! Now there is a little nest egg we'd all like to enjoy!

What would you do with an extra \$66,621 or \$133,241? You may be able to pay off your home, buy that sports car you always wanted, take an incredible cruise in the lap of luxury, or spend a year just bumming around the country or Europe, taking in the sights and sounds of states or countries you have never seen in person. Of course, these figures to do nothing to speak of the enrichment you receive from better health, a longer life, and all the social and psychological factors that improve when you quit smoking for good.

If you are still not convinced, consider some of the costs of smoking that go beyond the \$5 you spend on a pack of cigarettes. For example, if you will purchase life insurance, as a smoker you will have to pay about \$1,000 per year more than a non-smoker. If you purchase your own health insurance as a smoker, you will quite possibly pay about \$350 per year more on the premiums than a non-smoker in a similar state of health as you are.

Similarly, homeowners' insurance carriers quite often not only ask if there is a big dog on the premises whose bites may result in suits against the policy, but they now also question if a smoker is occupying the premises. Home fires caused by negligent smoking cost a small fortune, and the insurance rates for smokers are usually about \$60 per year more on a policy.

Add an additional annual \$50 for your car insurance rate as well, since smokers tend to engage in behaviors while driving that may lead to accidents. Suddenly, our one-pack a day smoker is no longer just saving \$1,825 per year, but an actual \$3,285! Invest this over a thirty-year period at six percent a year and you are looking at \$119,917!

Our heavy smoker with the \$3,650 a year habit can accumulate an amazing \$186,538. Who says that quitting smoking won't make you rich? Of course, all of these calculations have not even begun to factor in the savings of healthcare co-payments and medication expenses that are not being incurred simply because you have quit smoking. Similarly, you will not lose time at work due to smoking related illness, which also will not mean lost wages and lost social security payments that will later on affect your retirement benefits. All things considered, quitting smoking is a fiscally sound decision all the way around.

Hypnosis to Quit Smoking – Does This Really Work?

You know you want to quit smoking, and you also know it will be tough. Perhaps you have already tried everything: you have gone cold turkey, only to hightail it to the corner store in the middle of the night when your nerves were shot and you could not sleep for the third night in a row. Perhaps if you have tried the nicotine replacement products, such as the gum, patch or spray, and while your arm was all patched up, you were still lighting up. Maybe you tried the herbal supplements only to have a queasy stomach and a craving to smoke that was unabashed. Possibly you have tried acupuncture only to find the results too short-lived to even be worth a continued effort.

On the flipside, maybe you have been smoke-free for a while but the temptation to relapse has become frighteningly strong and you are looking for some way to combat the urge to simply give in, throw caution to the wind, and once again fill your lungs with the poisons of the smoke. There is, however, one method you have not yet attempted: hypnosis. Of course, much has been said and written about this method and you wonder if hypnosis to quit smoking really does work.

Hypnosis has forever become associated with the slapstick routines of old, the sideshow, or the carnival. People were made to act like chickens or dogs – much to the amusement of the on-looking audience. In reality, hypnosis is a recognized psychotherapy tool that uses a form of directed relaxation in addition to a directed suggestion to your subconscious mind. Have you ever driven your car and suddenly jerked yourself out of an apparent lull? This may very well have been a very rudimentary method of self-hypnosis. You are still functioning on a conscious level, but your subconscious mind has wandered to something else and your body has relaxed.

In a therapeutic setting, a hypnotist will seek to aid you in reaching this state of relaxation. Many who have gone to a hypnotist to quit smoking will swear by this method. Of course, there are always some who will continue on smoking and for whom this method will not work. It is important to remember that each person is an individual and as such has individual needs, problems, and habits to overcome. Each method will not work for each individual, but if you have tried multiple methods, there really is no harm in also attempting hypnosis.

If you do decide to give hypnosis a try, it is important to keep a few things in mind:

If you choose to check out hypnotherapies, make sure that the therapist is actually certified in her or his chosen field. Anyone can hang up a shingle and call themselves a hypnotherapist, but the certifying authorities, such as the National Board for Certified Hypnotherapists, are quite picky in their requirements. These requirements are educational as well as experiential. Many times a psychologist or psychiatrist will also be experienced in hypnotherapy, and are quite possibly able to help you.

Find out about the hypnosis. Does the hypnotherapist only recommend one session, or will she or he provide a number of sessions? What will be accomplished in these sessions? Usually it will take more than one session to affect a behavior modification on a permanent basis. Remember: hypnosis is not a cure-all; it simply helps you to accomplish your goal.

There are many products on the market now that seek to train eager soon to be non-smokers to self-hypnotize. While some folks may most certainly have a knack for learning how to do this at home, it is not as easy as it sounds. In addition to the foregoing, if you are fighting to overcome your cravings, this may not be a good time to attempt to learn how to do this, but instead a professional will be able to offer much input and guidance.

Hypnotherapy is only one method. The most effective road to a smoke-free life encompasses a variety of methods as well as realistic and lasting behavior modifications. You will still need to avoid tempting situations and deal with your physical cravings while you are weaning yourself away from your addiction.

Medications to Help You Quit the Smoking Habit

As anyone who has tried before knows, quitting an addictive behavior like smoking is a very difficult process. Along with support groups and behavior modification techniques, the U.S. FDA (Food and Drug Administration) has approved six medications to aid in your quest to quit smoking. These medications help you break your addiction to nicotine and transition more smoothly into a smoke-free life.

The majority of medications to help quit smoking fall into the category of nicotine replacement therapy. These include medications available over the counter in the form of a nicotine patch (also prescription-only, depending on brand), nicotine lozenge, or nicotine gum. Nicotine inhalers and nicotine nasal sprays are available by prescription.

If you would prefer to use a non-nicotine replacement medication, you have several options. Bupropion SR is an anti-depressant prescribed by a doctor. Many people have also found that alternative medicine helps them with the painful process of withdrawal. No matter which medication you choose, if any, be sure to consult with your doctor before beginning or stopping treatment.

Nicotine patch. A smoker wears a new patch daily on his or her upper body for eight weeks or longer. The patch passes nicotine into your system by transferring it from your skin into your bloodstream. Name brands Nicoderm CQ and Nicotrol are available over-the-counter, while Habitrol is prescription only. If, after the first week of treatment, you have still not quit smoking entirely, speak to your doctor about adjusting the dosage or using additional medication.

Nicotine lozenge. Lozenges dissolve in your mouth and passes nicotine into your bloodstream through the lining of your mouth. Doses are set at two milligrams for regular smokers and four milligrams for heavy smokers, and are recommended to be taken every couple hours for six weeks. After that point, you can decrease the number of doses through the following six weeks. The brand name Commit lozenge is available over-the-counter.

Nicotine gum. Like the lozenges, nicotine gum delivers nicotine through the mouth's lining. Doses vary between two- and four-milligrams; most users chew between 10 and 15 pieces daily. Nicotine gum should be used for a one- to three-month period, and is not recommended for longer than six months. Probably the best-known brand name, Nicorette, is available over-

the-counter.

Nicotine inhaler. An inhaler works to satisfy smoking urges, as well as strictly nicotine cravings. Looking similar to a cigarette holder, the inhaler gives you a chance to puff, which causes it to give off nicotine vapors. The vapors are absorbed by the mouth lining and delivered to the bloodstream and, eventually, the brain. The brand name Nicotrol inhaler is available via prescription.

Nicotine nasal spray. The nasal spray delivers its effects more quickly than either the gum or the patch. Nicotine is sprayed directly into the nostrils. After being absorbed by nasal membranes, the nicotine is passed into the veins and to the heart and brain. Known as brand name Nicotrol NS, nasal spray is typically prescribed for three-month periods, to be used for a maximum of six months.

Bupropion SR. Bupropion SR does not contain nicotine. Rather, this antidepressant increases dopamine levels in the brain, which is the chemical that is boosted by nicotine. Bupropion's side effects include dry mouth, headaches, and sleep disturbance. Known as brand name Zyban, bupropion must be prescribed by a doctor and shouldn't be given to patients with a history of seizures or serious head trauma. Other antidepressants such as nortriptyline may be an alternative option.

Alternative medicine. Although alternative medicine exists in many forms, the ones used most often for quitting smoking are behavior therapy and relaxation techniques. In behavior therapy, a therapist helps you understand why you smoke, develop coping skills, and thereby change your behaviors and thoughts. Relaxation techniques or meditation focus on reducing stress.

Using a medication to quit smoking makes you twice as likely to quit successfully. The most successful form of treatment of all is the use of therapy or counseling in conjunction with medication. If you are thinking about quitting, find out as much as possible about all the quitting aids available to you through this website and others, and consult with your health services provider.

Stop Flapping Your Wings and Quit Cold Turkey

Many smokers may think that quitting cold turkey is a more painful process than a gradual withdrawal from nicotine. However, some quitters maintain that quitting cold turkey—an immediate and complete withdrawal from nicotine without the aid of nicotine supplements—is a better way to go because nicotine supplements merely draw out the process and the nicotine addiction.

WhyQuit.com maintains that, as long as nicotine is still in a smoker's system, his body will continue to crave its full complement of the drug. Rather, if the smoker practices complete nicotine cessation, his withdrawal period will be shorter (roughly two weeks) and his cravings less intense. A mere 20 minutes after smoking her last cigarette, a smoker will already start to feel the positive effects of quitting. Within 72 hours of complete nicotine cessation, all nicotine

and carbon dioxide will be gone from a smoker's system, and he will be well on his way to improved health.

However, the first few weeks of nicotine withdrawal will require a smoker to be determined and outwit her addiction. Below is some advice from successful quitters on how to stop making excuses and get started on quitting, cold turkey.

Make a list of reasons and keep it handy. When you first decide to quit, make a list of reasons why you are motivated to quit smoking—it could be health concerns, overall fitness, appearance, or anything that you personally consider a good reason to quit. Keep your list handy for consultation whenever you get the urge to light up another cigarette. Both your mind and body will be craving nicotine, and you need to prepare your defenses.

Be aware of your triggers. Smoking is not only a physical addiction to nicotine—it also has an element of mental addiction. As you're preparing to quit, pay attention to any events or feelings that may trigger you're craving for a smoke. When you feel stressed out at work or depressed, do you reach for the cigarettes? Consider the situations in which you smoke most often, and brainstorm ways to combat those habits once you've quit.

Some ways that many successful quitters have worked through nicotine cravings include:

- Avoiding smoky environments like bars or clubs,
- Starting new habits like exercise, hobbies, or classes to distract yourself from smoking, and
- Having healthy snacks such as celery and carrots on hand to keep your hands busy.

Form a support group. Without support from your friends and family, quitting smoking will be a much more difficult process. Tell close family members and buddies about your intentions to quit, and ask for their patience and support. Additionally, it is often helpful to get guidance and support from other smokers who are quitting or who have successfully quit.

Many online groups can be found by searching on "how to quit smoking." These groups offer discussion boards and sometimes counseling either in-person or over the phone. You can also speak with your healthcare or insurance provider for local groups that offer face-to-face support.

Implement a reward system. Every time you resist the urge to smoke a cigarette, you come one step closer to successfully quitting. Be sure to recognize to yourself and others the progress you've made. Reward yourself on a regular basis with something that you would find motivational—anything from time to read a good book to a weekend trip.

Change your mindset. Because of the difficulty of quitting smoking, many smokers feel defeated before they even start. To quit successfully, you need to make a conscious effort to change your mindset to guarantee a positive outcome. Instead of dwelling on the obstacles, remind yourself of the reasons why you quit, and how your life will improve after you have stopped smoking. Engage in meditation or behavioral therapy to reinforce new, healthier habits and kick the unhealthy nicotine addiction.

Quitting smoking is one of the most difficult challenges that many people will face in their lives. Within one year after quitting, smokers have only a 5-10% success rate. By quitting cold turkey, you decrease your withdrawal time and increase your chances of success. With support and planning—and plenty of time and patience—your smoking days will become a thing of the past.

How to Distract Those Cravings for Cigarettes

One of the toughest aspects of kicking the nicotine habit is learning to survive the intense cravings that can strike at any time. If you're trying to quit smoking, but find yourself continually succumbing to the tug of intense cravings, here are five ideas that past smokers have successfully used to kick the habit permanently.

1) Understand the nature of your cravings. When you're trying to quit smoking, it helps to understand exactly what is causing those irritating cravings. Nicotine is a powerful chemical that stimulates all the pleasure impulses in your brain. When your brain detects that it has not received its regular dose of nicotine, you are bound to feel the effects. As many lifelong smokers know, even if you just recently smoked (and thus, your brain does not detect a lack of nicotine), the urge to light up again can be triggered by any number of things. Even if you just happen to detect the smell of cigarettes, this could be enough to trigger an intense craving.

If you're trying to quit smoking, it's important to avoid any environments that you suspect or know will trigger these cravings. Pay close attention to your particular triggers. Write it down: make a list of all the things you suspect make you want to crave cigarettes. Just being aware of your triggers will help you overcome them.

2) Avoid stress. The best way to beat your cravings is to avoid them in the first place. Most people reach for their lighters and cigarettes at moments of stress. Try your best to avoid excessive emotional and physical stress as you quit smoking. Don't take on extra work assignments, and try to minimize stress in your personal life. Even a few simple changes in your everyday routine can help you avoid round-the-clock cravings.

3) Set up your own support network. Tell friends and family of your intention to quit smoking, and enlist them to operate as your personal support network. When the cravings hit, call or visit someone in your support network. Try to have at least one designated person whom you can call at almost any time. Ideally, this individual would be a past smoker who has successfully quit, and who can lend you with valuable advice and comfort.

4) Go for walk or a jog. Getting your heart pumping and your body moving can be an excellent distraction when you feel a craving coming on. Although you may not feel it at first, the exercise will stimulate your brain to release those feel-good chemicals endorphins.

5) Chew gum, eat an apple. Many smokers are so used to having something to put in their mouth that the absence of cigarettes can feel excruciatingly obvious. That old stand-by chewing gum is easy to carry, and helps compensate for the lack of cigarettes. Another good, healthy choice is to carry an apple or other easy-to-carry snack, and chew on it whenever your nicotine cravings strike.

6) Put your hands into action. Putting your hands into motion when a craving strikes you is another way to simulate the act of smoking, thereby reducing the intensity of your craving. Think of things you like to do that involve a physical activity you do with your hands. If you like to knit, draw, or do jigsaw puzzles, put your hands to use when you feel a craving coming on.

7) Practice deep breathing and other relaxation techniques. Deep breathing is one of the best things you can do to help diminish the anxiety that accompanies most cravings. Simply sit in a quiet location, place your hand over your abdominal muscles, and take a long deep breath. As you inhale, you should imagine the air traveling all the way to the pit of your stomach, and you should let your stomach expand. Hold the breath for three seconds, then slowly release.

8) Set the clock and wait it out. If all else fails, look at your clock or watch and wait the craving out. How long do most cravings last? Researchers have found that most intense cravings are actually quite short in duration, lasting on average between three to five minutes. While looking at the clock, try repeating a calming mantra, such as "I can go three minutes without smoking," or "This craving will soon pass."

You're Not Too Old To Kick the Habit

Do wish you could stop smoking, but think you're just too old to kick the habit? Research has proven time and time again that you are never too old to stop smoking. As soon as you rub out your last cigarette, you will begin to experience the health and lifestyle benefits of living without smoking. Here are eight things you should know if you think you might be too old to kick the habit.

1) If you think it's too late to make a difference, think again. You can always improve your health, and one of the best ways to do that is to stop smoking. Even if you have been smoking for 50 or more years, the effect of quitting can be noted right away. Just 20 minutes after your last cigarette, your body will demonstrate a marked improvement. Your blood pressure and pulse will decrease closer to their normal range. Eight hours after your last cigarette, the nicotine and carbon monoxide in your bloodstream will be cut in half!

2) You will breathe better if you quit smoking. Is anyone ever too old to breathe better? If you enjoy laughing and singing (and who doesn't?), you can bet that you will once again be able to give a big belly laugh and sing at the top of your lungs once your lungs have been cleared of the mucous and debris left behind by years of smoking. If you are prone to coughs, wheezing, and snoring, stopping smoking will help alleviate these conditions significantly.

3) You will have more energy. Smoking robs your body of breath and life, leaving you feeling sluggish and tired. If you quit smoking, you will have the strength to do the physical activities you want to do, without the strain imposed by smoking.

4) Your risk of getting a heart attack is drastically reduced. Nicotine steals the oxygen from your bloodstream, forcing your heart to work harder. As you age, your risk of getting a heart

attack increases. If you don't want to become part of the statistics, you should seriously consider kicking your smoking habit.

5) You are better prepared to quit. If you have been a lifelong smoker, you probably already have experience with trying to quit. Rather than seeing past experiences as a failure, consider past attempts a learning experience. Why do you think you weren't able to stop smoking? Make a list of the things that hindered your attempt to stop smoking, and the things you think were most helpful. Make a list of the things you would do if you were trying to quit smoking again. Seek out your physician's advice on this matter. New products are fast becoming available that can help even the most hardened smoker's quit successfully.

6) Your health insurance premiums may go down if you quit smoking. With health care at an all time high, being a smoker can get quite expensive if you're shopping for a good insurance policy. Imagine the money you will save, and the better coverage you will receive, if you quit smoking.

7) Make a list of how your life would improve if you quit smoking. One of the best ways to get truly motivated is to become conscious of the ways smoking affects all aspects of your life. Make a Pro's and Con's list. What do you get out of smoking, if anything? What are the things that most bother you about being a smoker? Everybody knows that smoking is harmful on your health and on your wallet. Try to find your own personal reasons and motivations to quit. Are you embarrassed by the smell? Do you fear a heart attack? Do you worry about the effects of second hand smoke on your loved ones? Write all the things that most bother you about being a smoker, and place them in a prominent location where you can see them when the urge to light up strikes.

8) You will feel a sense of pride in quitting. What could be more meritorious than a person who has smoked for most of their life, then quits? Everyone loves hearing about such success stories. Knowing you quit after so many years will provide you with a great source of pride and strength. You may even inspire other lifelong smokers!

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