

# This Is Your Year to Quit Smoking

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Office on Smoking and Health (OSH) knows that it may take a number of tries before you're able to quit for good, but it can be done. In fact, so many people have quit that there are now more former smokers than current smokers in the United States. Quitting can be challenging, but you can find support for your quit journey where and when you need it, to raise your chances of quitting for good. This year make a New Year's resolution to quit smoking for good.

"At this time of year, we know that many smokers make a resolution to quit and start off on a healthier course," says Corinne Graffunder, DrPH, MPH, director of OSH. "If now is your time to quit tobacco, there are many tools available to help you find and follow a quit strategy that works for you."

Whether you've never tried to quit or have tried many times, a new year means another chance to create your successful quit plan.

## **It's never too early to quit.**

No matter how long you've smoked, there are health benefits to quitting. James, a participant in the Tips From Former Smokers® campaign and a smoker for 30 years, started having some trouble doing everyday tasks. He also learned he had diabetes. So, James decided he needed a healthier lifestyle. He put down cigarettes and started exercising. Quitting smoking gave him the energy to bike, run, and swim—things he couldn't imagine doing before.

James said he wanted to send a message to people who think smoking won't harm them because they haven't had a major smoking-related illness. "I want to help people like me quit smoking," he said. "Maybe nothing really bad has happened to you yet. Maybe you're lucky, but you're probably not going to stay lucky."

## **It's still a leading cause of death.**

Even though adult smoking rates are at an all-time low, cigarette smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the country, with 480,000 people dying every year.

Smoking is linked to many dangerous diseases, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, emphysema, and cancer. Smoking around others hurts their health, too. Breathing secondhand smoke can cause many of the same illnesses as smoking does. It can make children get sick more often, and smoking while pregnant raises the risk of a baby dying suddenly in the first year of life. No amount of secondhand smoke is risk-free.

## **Find what works for you.**

Every smoker's quit journey is different. It may take some time to find the strategies that help you stay quit. It helps to create a quit plan. Some of the steps in an effective quit plan include the following:

1. Pick a quit date. Choose a date only a week or two away, and highlight that day in your calendar or phone.
2. Tell loved ones and friends that you're quitting. Let them know how they can help you quit.
3. List reasons to quit.
4. Get rid of cigarettes and anything that reminds you of smoking.
5. Pick out feelings, places, and situations that make you want to smoke. It's easier to avoid them if you've identified them!
6. Have healthy strategies to fight cravings.

## **Build your strategies.**

Smokers crave cigarettes because they contain a drug called nicotine, and smoking makes your body dependent on nicotine. Stopping smoking causes nicotine withdrawal, which can be uncomfortable, especially in the first weeks. There are ways to get through withdrawal—these can include support from family or a counselor, as well as medication that helps ease cravings.

It may take many tries to quit. The important thing is not to give up. Health care providers such as doctors and nurses can be good supporters in your quit journey. Your doctor may recommend some of the medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to help people quit smoking. These may include nicotine replacement therapy medicines, which are patches, gums, or lozenges that give the body a small amount of nicotine to ease cravings without the other harmful effects of smoking cigarettes. Pharmacists can let you know about the effects of any medicine your doctor prescribes.

## **It's not too late.**

Whether you smoked for decades, like James, or only just started, whether you have a smoking-related illness or haven't felt the damage from smoking yet, quitting right now can put you on the road to better health.

Says former smoker Dean G.: "Can't wait to see my health continue to improve. Quitting is the best decision I ever made."

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U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health. (Reviewed 2019, April 19). *It's never too early to quit smoking*. Retrieved November 20, 2019, from <https://www.cdc.gov>

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