

Smoking Cessation

Quitting smoking (smoking cessation) is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health and well-being. People who stop smoking decrease their risk of cancer, heart disease, stroke, and early death. Women who stop smoking before or during pregnancy reduce their risk of infertility or having a low-birth-weight baby. Most smokers in the United States report that they want to stop smoking, but kicking the smoking habit can be difficult. Most ex-smokers try several times, often as many as 8 to 10 times, before they are able to quit for good. The results are definitely worth those efforts. The July 5, 2006, issue of JAMA includes articles about varenicline, a new drug treatment aimed at helping patients to quit smoking and to remain smoke-free.

HOW TO QUIT SMOKING

- Be committed. Keep in mind why you want to quit and stay motivated.
- Get help from your doctor and continue to follow up with your doctor, especially during the first month.
- Choose a firm date to quit and mark your calendar. Choose a time that is not particularly stressful and that does not involve situations associated with smoking.
- Begin to cut back prior to your quit date.
- Consider joining a support group of ex-smokers or other stop-smoking programs such as those offered by the American Lung Association or the American Cancer Society.
- Tell friends, family, and coworkers that you are quitting smoking so that they can offer motivation and support.
- Remove smoking from your environment. Avoid places where people congregate to smoke. Remove cigarettes from your car, home, and work.
- Anticipate that you may experience withdrawal symptoms, such as cigarette cravings, anxiety, irritability, and restlessness, even with nicotine replacement or drug treatment. These symptoms usually peak at 1 to 3 weeks after quitting but generally become manageable within a few weeks.
- Eat a healthy diet and stay active in order to help with stress and to minimize weight gain.

NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

Nicotine replacement therapy helps relieve the withdrawal symptoms that many smokers say prevent them from quitting. It contains nicotine but without the harmful substances found in cigarettes. Nicotine gum, patches, and lozenges are available over the counter. Nicotine inhalers and nasal sprays are available by prescription.

NON-NICOTINE DRUG THERAPY

Bupropion and varenicline are approved prescription drugs to help patients stop smoking. Both medications are generally well tolerated. The most common adverse effects are insomnia from bupropion and nausea from varenicline.

Most smokers trying to quit need drug therapy or nicotine replacement therapy. Talk with your doctor about the therapy appropriate for you.

Sources: American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, National Center for Chronic Disease and Prevention and Health Promotion

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American Cancer Society
800/ACS-2345
www.cancer.org
- American Lung Association
800/LUNG-USA
www.ffsonline.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
800/CDC-1311
www.cdc.gov/tobacco

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