

STOP FOR GOOD

KICK THE CIGARETTE HABIT NOW!

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The American Medical Association ran a campaign, "Stop for good." Tens of millions of people responded. So can you!

What you will be missing

You're aware of the effects of smoking: emphysema (a disease of the lungs which causes coughing and shortness of breath), cancer of the mouth, throat, voice box, and lungs, heart disease, stroke, birth defects,.. and on and on. When you stop smoking, you eliminate the carbon monoxide that replaces oxygen in your body, depriving your brain and muscles of oxygen and causing many smokers to be short of breath. Did you know that there is more carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke than in the car exhaust of most recently manufactured automobiles? When you stop smoking, you eliminate the thousands of chemicals in tobacco smoke that collect in the lungs and cause cancer. You also eliminate nicotine, a very strong and addictive drug. By quitting tobacco, your risk of death from all causes quickly drops from that of those who continue to smoke. Ten to fifteen years later it approximates that of a person who never smoked.

Why it's hard to stop smoking

There are several factors that contribute to the strength of a person's addiction to cigarettes. Part of the problem is behavioral, and the other part is chemical addiction. The best approach in stopping smoking is to identify exactly why you smoke. Some people find stimulation in smoking; they feel it helps them get going during the day. Others enjoy the ritual of handling cigarettes, puffing on them, and watching the smoke. Some find pleasure in cigarettes, and others use them to relax and reduce tension. Some smoke out of habit, or for social reasons. Some because of the physical addiction to the nicotine.

Preparing your mind to stop

As you make your plan to stop smoking, first identify the reasons you smoke. Each time you light up, ask yourself why you are smoking that cigarette. By identifying your reasons for smoking, you can plan an approach that will substitute other behaviors for your present ones. For example, if you enjoy handling cigarettes, you can substitute doodling with a pen or pencil, handling a coin or polished rock, or play with a paper clip. If cigarettes help you relax, you can train yourself to relax by using deep breathing exercises or taking up a hobby. Changing your environment can help habits: throw away the cigarettes and ashtrays, chew sugar-free gum, and avoid places where people smoke heavily. These are only a few examples. The point is that if you define the reasons you smoke, you can definitely take the steps you will need to help you once you quit.

Nicotine addiction & Nicotine Patches

If you smoke more than 15 cigarettes a day, or smoke your first cigarette within 30 minutes of waking up in the morning, or if it is hard for you not to smoke in places where smoking is forbidden, then you may be physically dependent upon nicotine. You may be a good candidate for nicotine. These patches are placed on the skin and are changed daily. They contain nicotine in a special system that allows release of the drug at a controlled rate. The nicotine is absorbed through the skin and enters the blood stream. A constant level of nicotine is achieved in the blood stream, and the craving for nicotine is eliminated. Some people prefer using nicotine gum instead of the skin patches.

By eliminating the craving for nicotine, the patches eliminate a major physical need for cigarettes. They do not eliminate all of the other psychological needs for cigarettes, but it certainly is easier to deal with the behavioral aspects if you don't have to deal with the nicotine craving at the same time.

If you prepare yourself to quit, understand what behaviors reinforce your smoking, and plan to deal with them, then the nicotine patches or gum can help the nicotine craving and allow you to stop smoking and modify your behaviors. After a few weeks of using the nicotine patches or gum, and not smoking, most people can then stop the nicotine supplement, and do well without the cigarettes.

Getting started

Once you identify your reasons for smoking and your game plan for substituting other behaviors, get help from your friends. Get rid of cigarettes and reminders of smoking. If you are addicted to nicotine, get patches or gum. If you need more help with anxiety, see your physician. Select a date for stopping – ideally a day when you will be least tempted to smoke (like a day off work). Then go cold turkey. If you try to stop gradually, each cigarette then becomes more important to you. Make a clean break. And if at first you don't succeed, keep stopping until you STOP FOR GOOD!