



Freshstart

Participant's Guide

This program is sponsored by:



Community Cancer Center



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Welcome to the American Cancer Society Freshstart® program. Congratulations on taking your first step toward becoming a former smoker. Today, there are more former smokers than current smokers in the United States.¹

The goal of the Freshstart program is to help you prepare for a successful quit attempt. A lot of resources are available to help you, and by taking part in the Freshstart program, you will discover how you too can become a former smoker.

Your role as a participant

This is an opportunity for you to quit smoking and maybe help others along the way, too. You and your Freshstart group will get the most out of this program if you come to each meeting prepared to share your experiences and ideas about quitting. You will learn a lot from the sessions, no matter if quitting is easier or harder than you expected. Your presence here is crucial for your success – and everyone else’s, too.

Freshstart program design

The four sections in the Freshstart Participant’s Guide are all dedicated to the steps you go through when quitting smoking. During the group sessions, you will be asked to complete brief written exercises (activities), which are designed to help you learn and to make the process of quitting easier. Because the Freshstart program is packed with important information, it works best if you look over what was discussed after each group meeting.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Quitting Smoking Among Adults—United States, 2001–2010](#). *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

session
1

Decide to Quit



What do I need to know about quitting?

The US Surgeon General has said, "Smoking cessation [stopping smoking] represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives."

Quitting smoking is not easy, but you can do it. To have the best chance of success, you need to know what you're up against, what your options are, and where to go for help. You'll find that information here.

Why is it so hard to quit smoking?

Mark Twain said, "Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a thousand times." Maybe you've tried to quit, too. Why is quitting and staying quit hard for so many people? The answer is nicotine.

Nicotine

Nicotine is a drug found naturally in tobacco. It is highly addictive – as addictive as heroin or cocaine. Over time, a person becomes physically and emotionally addicted to (dependent on) nicotine. Studies have shown that smokers must deal with both the physical and psychological (mental) dependence to quit and stay quit.

How nicotine gets in, where it goes, and how long it stays

When you inhale smoke, nicotine is carried deep into your lungs. There it is absorbed quickly into the bloodstream and carried throughout your body. Nicotine affects many parts of the body, including your heart and blood vessels, your hormones, your metabolism, and your brain.

Several different factors can affect how long it takes the body to remove nicotine and its by-products. In most cases, regular smokers will still have nicotine or its by-products, such as cotinine, in their bodies for about three to four days after stopping.

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How nicotine hooks smokers

Nicotine produces pleasant feelings that make the smoker want to smoke more. It also acts as a kind of depressant by interfering with the flow of information between nerve cells. After a while, the smoker develops a tolerance to nicotine. Tolerance means that it takes more nicotine to get the same effect that the smoker used to get from smaller amounts. This leads to an increase in smoking over time. The smoker reaches a certain nicotine level and then keeps smoking to maintain this level of nicotine.

Why should I quit?

Your health

Health concerns usually top the list of reasons people give for quitting smoking. People want to stay well. This is a very real concern: about half of all smokers who keep smoking will end up dying from a smoking-related illness.

Cancer

Nearly everyone knows that smoking can cause lung cancer, but few people realize it is also a risk factor for many other kinds of cancer, too, including cancer of the mouth, voice box (larynx), throat (pharynx), esophagus, bladder, kidney, pancreas, cervix, ovary, colorectum, stomach, and some leukemias.

Lung diseases

Smoking also increases your risk of getting lung diseases like emphysema and chronic bronchitis. These diseases are grouped together under the term COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease). COPD causes chronic illness and disability, and worsens over time – sometimes becoming fatal. Emphysema and chronic bronchitis can be found in people as young as 40, but are usually found later in life, when the symptoms get much worse. Long-term smokers have the highest risk of developing severe COPD. Pneumonia and tuberculosis are also included in the list of diseases caused or made worse by smoking.

Heart attacks, strokes, and blood vessel diseases

Smokers are twice as likely to die from heart attacks as non-smokers. And smoking is a major risk factor for peripheral vascular disease, a narrowing of the blood vessels that carry blood to the legs and arm muscles. Smoking also affects the walls of the vessels that carry blood to the brain (carotid arteries), which can cause strokes. Men who smoke are more likely to develop erectile dysfunction (impotence) because of blood vessel disease.

Blindness and other problems

Smoking causes an increased risk of macular degeneration, one of the most common causes of blindness in older people. It also causes premature wrinkling of the skin, bad breath, bad-smelling clothes and hair, and yellow fingernails.

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Special risks to women and babies

Women have some unique risks linked to smoking. Women over 35 who smoke and use birth control pills have a higher risk of heart attack, stroke, and blood clots of the legs. Women who smoke are more likely to miscarry (lose the baby) or have a lower birth-weight baby. And low birth-weight babies are more likely to die or have learning and physical problems.

Years of life lost due to smoking

Based on data collected in the late 1990s, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that adult male smokers lost an average of 13.2 years of life and female smokers lost 14.5 years of life because of smoking. And given the diseases that smoking can cause, it can steal your quality of life long before you die. For instance, smoking-related illness can limit your activities by making it harder to breathe, get around, work, or play.

Why quit now?

No matter how old you are or how long you've smoked, quitting can help you live longer and stay well. People who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk of dying in the next 15 years in half, compared to those who keep smoking. Ex-smokers enjoy a higher quality of life with fewer illnesses from cold and flu viruses, better self-reported health, and reduced rates of bronchitis and pneumonia.

For decades, the US Surgeon General has reported the health risks linked to smoking. In 1990, the Surgeon General concluded:

- Quitting smoking has major and immediate health benefits for men and women of all ages. These benefits apply to people who already have smoking-related disease and those who don't.
- Ex-smokers live longer than people who keep smoking.
- Quitting smoking lowers the risk of lung cancer, other cancers, heart attack, stroke, and chronic lung disease.
- Women who stop smoking before pregnancy or during the first three to four months of pregnancy reduce their risk of having a low birth-weight baby compared to that of women who never smoked.
- The health benefits of quitting smoking are far greater than any risks from the small weight gain (usually less than 10 pounds) or any emotional or psychological problems that may follow quitting.

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Immediate rewards of quitting

Kicking the tobacco habit offers some benefits that you'll notice right away and some that will develop over time. These rewards can improve your day-to-day life a great deal.

- Your breath smells better.
- Stained teeth get whiter.
- Your clothes and hair smell better.
- The yellow stains on your fingers and fingernails disappear.
- Food tastes better.
- Your sense of smell returns to normal.
- You may notice that you are not out of breath as much after everyday activities (such as climbing stairs or light housework).

Cost

Smoking is expensive. Look at the table below to estimate how much money you spend on cigarettes.

Savings per month

If you smoke (pack[s] per day)	And you spend (per day)	You spend (per month)	You spend (per year)
1	\$6.18	\$185.40	\$2,255.70
2	\$12.36	\$370.80	\$4,511.40
3	\$18.54	\$556.20	\$6,767.10

Source: Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, December 22, 2014. State Excise and Sales Taxes per Pack of Cigarettes Total Amounts & State Rankings. Accessed at: <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0202.pdf> on May 15, 2015.

Depending on where you live, the expense may be higher or lower than in this example. But the amount you pay for cigarettes doesn't include other possible costs, such as higher costs for health and life insurance, and likely health care costs due to tobacco-related problems.

Social acceptance

Smoking is less socially acceptable now than in the past.

Almost all workplaces now have some type of smoking rules. Studies show that employees who smoke cost businesses more because they are out sick more often. Employees who are ill more frequently than others can increase the need for expensive short-term replacement workers. They can also increase insurance costs both for other employees and for the employer, who often pays part of the workers' insurance premiums. Smokers in a building can also increase the maintenance costs of keeping odors down, since residue from cigarette smoke clings to carpets, drapes, and other fabrics.

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Landlords may choose not to rent to smokers, since maintenance costs and insurance rates may rise when smokers live or work in the building.

Smokers may also find their prospects for dating or romantic involvement, including marriage, are largely limited to other smokers, who make up less than one in five of the adult population.

Friends may ask you not to smoke in their homes or cars. Public buildings, concerts, and even sporting events are largely smoke-free. And more and more communities are restricting smoking in all public places, including restaurants and bars. Like it or not, finding a place to smoke can be a hassle.

Health of others

Studies have shown that secondhand smoke causes thousands of deaths each year from lung cancer and heart disease in healthy non-smokers.

If a parent smokes, his or her baby has a higher risk of developing asthma in childhood, especially if a mother smokes while pregnant. Smoking during pregnancy is also linked to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and low birth-weight infants. Babies and children raised in a household where there is smoking have more ear infections, colds, bronchitis, and other lung and breathing problems than children from non-smoking families. Secondhand smoke can also cause eye irritation, headaches, nausea, and dizziness.

Setting an example

If you have children, you probably want to set a good example for them. When asked, nearly all smokers say they don't want their children to smoke, but children whose parents smoke are more likely to start smoking themselves. You can become a good role model for them by quitting now.

Making the decision to quit – how do people change?

Researchers have looked into how and why people stop smoking. They have some ideas, or models, of how this happens, but the decision to quit smoking is one that only you can make. Others may want you to quit, but the real commitment must come from you.

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The Health Belief Model of behavior change

The Health Belief Model says that you will be more likely to stop smoking if you:

- Believe that you could get a smoking-related disease and this worries you
- Believe that you can make an honest attempt at quitting smoking
- Believe that the benefits of quitting outweigh the benefits of continuing to smoke
- Know someone who has had health problems as a result of their smoking

Do any of these apply to you?

Stages of Change Model of behavior change

The Stages of Change Model identifies the stages that a person goes through in making a change in behavior. Here are the stages as they apply to quitting smoking:

Pre-contemplation: At this stage, the smoker is not seriously thinking about quitting.

Contemplation: The smoker is actively thinking about quitting but is not quite ready to make a serious attempt. This person may say, "Yes, I'm ready to quit, but the stress at work is too much," or "I don't want to gain weight," or "I'm not sure if I can do it."

Preparation: Smokers in the preparation stage seriously intend to quit in the next month and often have tried to quit in the past 12 months. They usually have a plan.

Action: This is the first six months when the smoker is actively quitting.

Maintenance: This is the period of six months to five years after quitting when the ex-smoker is aware of the danger of relapse and takes steps to avoid it.

Where do you fit in this model?

Ambivalence

Ambivalence is defined as mixed emotions or feelings. There is a good chance that as you were deciding whether to join this group, you questioned your desire to quit smoking. Maybe the thought of "giving up" cigarettes does not appeal to you enough right now. This is normal.

To counteract any feelings of ambivalence, start thinking of reasons you should quit. Here are some examples:

1. I will feel healthier right away.
 - I will have more energy and be more focused.
 - My senses of smell and taste will be better.
 - I will have whiter teeth and fresher breath.
 - I will cough less and breathe better.

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2. I will be healthier the rest of my life.
 - I will lower my risk for cataracts, cancer, heart attacks, strokes, and early death.
3. I will make my spouse, partner, friends, family, kids, grandkids, and coworkers proud of me.
4. I will be proud of myself.
 - I will feel more in control of my life.
 - I will be a better role model for others.
5. I will have more money.
6. I won't have to worry: "When will I get to smoke next?" or "What do I do when I'm in a smoke-free place?"

Use the next activity to look at your reasons to stop smoking. The exercise is meant to help you decide what you would most like to do: quit smoking or keep smoking.



Activity: Decide if you will quit smoking or keep smoking

There are three parts to this activity:

1. Fill out each list: Reasons to Quit Smoking and Reasons to Keep Smoking. Be honest and thorough. Take your time and be fair to both sides, even if your reasons to keep smoking seem to outweigh those to quit. List your reasons side by side. Compare and contrast the two sides: Reasons to Quit Smoking and Reasons to Keep Smoking.
2. Review your list. Circle the more important items on both sides of the list.
3. Place a star next to the most important reason on your entire list.

Example:

Reasons to Quit Smoking	Reasons to Keep Smoking
I want to feel better	It helps me relax.
I want to be around for my kids and future grandkids.	I get time to myself.
It costs too much to smoke.	I don't want to have withdrawal symptoms.
I hate feeling chained to cigarettes.	I don't want to fail.
I've been thinking about it for so long, and I need to just quit!	

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Reasons to Quit Smoking	Reasons to Keep Smoking

Once you finish the exercise, carefully review your list. Ask yourself, “What do I want to do most – quit smoking or keep smoking?” It may be a close race, or one list wins by a landslide. Remember, few choices in life are simple. If your most important answer is that you want to stop smoking, then you are ready to quit.

Summary

You have many things to think about as you make the decision to quit smoking. It’s normal to feel ambivalent. Just keep in mind all of your reasons for quitting to help convince yourself to keep trying.