

Your Quit Day



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On your Quit Day, follow these suggestions:

- Do not smoke. This means *none at all* – not even one puff!
- Keep active – try walking, exercising, or doing other activities or hobbies.
- Drink lots of water and juices.
- Begin using nicotine replacement if that is your choice.
- Attend a stop-smoking class or follow your self-help plan.
- Avoid situations where the urge to smoke is strong.
- Reduce or avoid alcohol.
- Think about changing your routine. Use a different route to go to work. Drink tea instead of coffee. Eat breakfast in a different place or eat different foods.

Read on to find out more about the kinds of thoughts and temptations that come up when you try to quit, and ideas for strategies to deal with or avoid them.

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms can lead quitters back to smoking

When smokers try to cut back or quit, the lack of nicotine leads to withdrawal symptoms that are both physical and mental. Physically, the body reacts to the absence of nicotine. Mentally, the smoker is faced with giving up a habit, which calls for a major change in behavior. The physical and mental aspects both must be addressed for the quitting process to work.

Those who have smoked regularly for a few weeks or longer, and suddenly stop using tobacco or greatly reduce the amount smoked, will have withdrawal symptoms. Symptoms usually start within a few hours of the last cigarette and peak about two to three days later when most of the

session 3: Your Quit Day

nicotine and its by-products are out of the body. Withdrawal symptoms can last anywhere from a few days to several weeks.

Withdrawal symptoms can include any of the following:

- Dizziness (which may only last one to two days after quitting)
- Depression
- Feelings of frustration, impatience, and anger
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Sleep disturbances, including having trouble falling asleep and staying asleep, and having bad dreams or even nightmares
- Trouble concentrating
- Restlessness
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Increased appetite
- Cough, dry mouth, sore throat, and nasal drip
- Chest tightness
- Slower heart rate

These symptoms get better every day that you stay smoke-free, but they can lead you to start smoking cigarettes again to boost blood levels of nicotine back to a level where there are no symptoms. Be ready for this!

Smoking also makes your body get rid of certain drugs faster than usual. When you quit smoking, it changes the way your body handles some medicines. Ask your doctor if any medicines you take regularly need to be checked or changed after you quit.

Dealing with withdrawal

Withdrawal from nicotine has two parts – the physical and the mental. The physical symptoms, while annoying, are not life-threatening. Nicotine replacement and other medicines can help reduce many of these physical symptoms. But most smokers find that the bigger challenge is the mental part of quitting.

If you have been smoking for any length of time, smoking has become linked with nearly everything you do – waking up in the morning, eating, reading, watching TV, and drinking coffee, for example. It will take time to “un-link” smoking from these activities. This is why, even if you are using a nicotine replacement, you may still have strong urges to smoke.

session 3: Your Quit Day

Rationalizations are sneaky

One way to overcome these urges or cravings is to notice and identify rationalizations as they come up. A rationalization is a mistaken thought that seems to make sense to you at the time, but the thought is not based on reality. If you choose to believe such a thought, it can serve as a way to justify smoking. If you have tried to quit before, you will probably recognize many of these common rationalizations:

- I'll just have one to get through this rough spot.
- Today is not a good day. I'll quit tomorrow.
- It's my only vice.
- How bad is smoking, really? Uncle Harry smoked all his life, and he lived to be over 90.
- Air pollution is probably just as bad.
- You've got to die of something.
- Life is no fun without smoking.

You probably can add more to the list. As you go through the first few days without smoking, write down any rationalizations as they come up and recognize them for what they are: messages that can trick you into going back to smoking. Look out for them, because they always show up when you're trying to quit. After you write down the idea, let it go from your mind. Be ready with a distraction, a plan of action, and other ways to redirect your thoughts to something else.

Use the ideas below to help you stay committed to quitting.

Avoid temptation

Stay away from people and places where you are tempted to smoke. Later on you will be able to handle these with more confidence.

Change your habits

Use substitutes you can put in your mouth, such as sugarless gum or hard candy, and raw vegetables, such as carrot sticks, or sunflower seeds. Some people chew on a coffee stirrer or a straw. Switch to juices or water instead of alcohol or coffee. Take a different route to work. Take a brisk walk instead of a coffee break.

When you feel a craving coming on, remember the **Four D's** to get you through.

DO something else: Do something to reduce your stress. Exercise or do hobbies that keep your hands busy, such as needlework or woodworking, which can help distract you from the urge to smoke. Take a hot bath, exercise, or read a book.

DRINK water. Drink plenty of water during the day, especially during a craving. Drink it slowly.

DEEP breathing: When you were smoking, you breathed deeply as you inhaled the smoke. When the urge strikes now, breathe deeply and picture your lungs filling with fresh, clean air. Remind yourself of your reasons for quitting and the benefits you'll gain as an ex-smoker.

DELAY: If you feel that you are about to light up, delay. Tell yourself you must wait at least 10 minutes. Often this simple trick will allow you to move beyond the strong urge to smoke.

session 3: Your Quit Day

Reward yourself

What you're doing is not easy, so you deserve a reward. Put the money you would have spent on tobacco into a jar every day and then buy yourself a weekly treat. Buy a magazine or book, go out to eat, develop a new hobby, or take a yoga class. Or save the money for a major purchase. You can also reward yourself in ways that don't cost money: for example, visit a park or library, or check new local listings for free exhibits at museums, community centers, and colleges.

Stress management

Stress affects almost everyone, and learning to manage it can reduce its impact and make your life easier. Most people find that giving up smoking is stressful. For one thing, it takes concentration to remember not to smoke. It can also be stressful learning to cope in new ways, even when it promises to help both your physical and emotional health. Think about how you can deal with stress and not smoke. Look at the resources around you, and plan on how you will handle the stressors that will come your way.

Relaxation techniques

Learn to manage the symptoms of stress and to relax your body through exercises. Try these relaxation exercises:

Exercise 1: Deep-breathing exercise

Note: If you have trouble balancing yourself with your eyes closed, this exercise can also be done sitting down.

Stand up straight with your feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes and let your head bend forward. Let your head relax so that it naturally drops closer to your chest. Now, slowly inhale through your nose, drawing your breath deep into your abdomen. You should feel your stomach slowly expand as you inhale. Hold your breath and then slowly breathe out through your nose. Repeat this exercise four times slowly. If you get dizzy, stop. When you feel ready to stop the exercise completely, open your eyes.

Exercise 2: Muscle relaxation exercise

Note: If you have had a recent muscle strain, you may want to sit out this exercise. If you have trouble balancing yourself with your eyes closed, this exercise can also be done sitting or lying down.

Stand up straight with your feet firmly planted on the floor and your eyes closed. Begin by tensing your feet as if you were grabbing the floor with your toes. Stay in this position and make the grip on the floor with your toes and feet tighter. Now, start to move the tension up through your ankles, your calves, and into your thighs, tightening your muscles as hard as you can. Continue to move the tension up through your stomach, chest, and shoulders. Focus on driving the tension down through your arms to your hands. Clench your fists. Now, move the tension up through your neck, face, mouth, eyes, and scalp. Hold this tension for five seconds, four, three, two, one, and relax. Take your time and relax your whole body. When you feel fully relaxed, open your eyes.

Other relaxation techniques

There are many more ways to relax. Consider the following:

- Take a warm bath.
- Listen to music.
- Walk.
- Swim.
- Dance.
- Meditate or use visualization.
- Listen to relaxation CDs, podcasts, or other types of recordings.

Think positively

Unfortunately, some stressful situations cannot be changed or taken away. These situations are best handled by thinking as positively as possible. Many people find that they fall into a pattern of destructive or negative thinking. They blame themselves for circumstances over which they have little or no control. Some people who have given up smoking even blame the absence of smoking for their problems.

Keep this concept in mind: your thoughts produce your actions. If you feel down or tense and are thinking unpleasant thoughts, decide how you are going to respond to these thoughts so that you can be successful when you quit smoking.

For example: When stressed, I find that I can't handle one more day of cravings.

Negative response/action: I cannot handle the cravings; I am going to smoke again.

Positive response/action: I am going to take these cravings one day at a time and see how I feel at the end of one smoke-free week. If I fail, I am going to gear up and try to quit smoking again.

If your thoughts are constructive, you will have fewer symptoms of stress. Beware of negative thinking: it can often feed on itself and it taps into the old, addictive part of you. Negative thinking can undermine your goals of helping your body and overall health.



Activity: Positive and negative stress responses

In the box below, list some areas of stress in your life that you cannot change. Give both a positive and a negative way of thinking about the issue.

Thought/Stress	Negative Response/Action	Positive Response/Action

Summary: Making this time unique

This session was designed to help you manage stressful situations in your life in order to help you stop smoking successfully. Some of you may already be experiencing your first few days without tobacco. Focus on the positive fact that this time is unique because this time you are going to STOP smoking for good.