



How Can I Quit Smoking?

Smoking harms almost every tissue and organ in the body, including your heart and blood vessels. It also harms nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke.

If you smoke, you have good reason to worry about its effect on your health and the health of your loved ones and others. Deciding to quit is a big step. Following through is just as important. Quitting tobacco and nicotine addiction isn't easy, but others have done it, and you can, too.



Is it too late to quit smoking or vaping?

It's never too late to quit. In the year after you quit smoking, your excess risk of coronary heart disease drops by 50%. After 10 years, your risk is as low as that of someone who has never smoked. While you may crave tobacco or nicotine after quitting, most people feel that becoming tobacco-free is the most positive thing they've ever done for themselves.

How do I quit?

You are more likely to quit for good if you prepare for two things: your last cigarette, and the cravings, urges and feelings that come with quitting. Think about quitting in five steps:

- 1. Set a Quit Date.** Choose a date within the next seven days when you will quit smoking or vaping. Tell your family members and friends who are most likely to support your efforts.
- 2. Choose a method for quitting.** There are several ways to quit. Some include:
 - Stop all at once on your Quit Day.
 - Cut down the number of cigarettes per day or how many times you vape until you stop completely.
 - Smoke only part of each cigarette. If you use this method, you need to count how many puffs you take from each cigarette and reduce the number every two to three days.

- 3. Decide if you need medicines or other help to quit.** Talk with your health care provider to determine which medicine is best for you. Get instructions for using it. These may include nicotine replacements (gum, lozenges, spray, patch or inhaler) or prescription medicines, such as bupropion hydrochloride or varenicline. You could also ask about a referral for a smoking cessation program.
- 4. Plan for your Quit Day.** Get rid of all the cigarettes, matches, lighters, ashtrays and tobacco products in your home, office and car. Find healthy substitutes for smoking. Go for walks. Keep sugarless gum or mints with you. Munch carrots or celery sticks.
- 5. Stop smoking on your Quit Day.**

What if I smoke or vape after quitting?

It's hard to stay off tobacco and nicotine once you've given in, so do everything you can to avoid that "one." The urge will pass. The first two to five minutes will be the toughest. If you do smoke or vape after quitting:

- This doesn't mean you're a smoker again—do something now to get back on track.
- Don't punish or blame yourself—tell yourself you're still a nonsmoker.
- Think about what triggered the urge and decide what to do differently the next time.

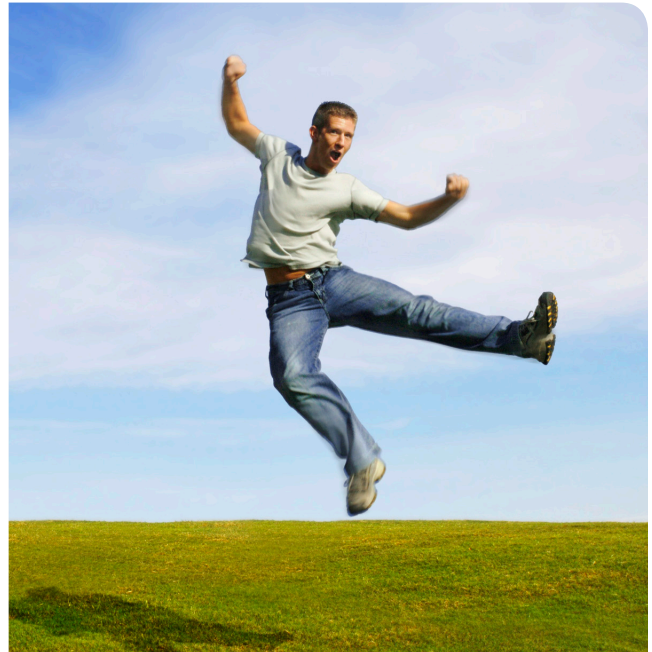
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- Sign a contract to stay tobacco-free.

What happens after I quit?

- Your senses of smell and taste come back.
- Your smoker's cough will go away.
- You'll breathe more easily.
- You'll be free from the mess and smell and the burns on your clothing.
- You'll increase your chances of living longer and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2** Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at heartinsight.org.
- 3** Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/supportnetwork.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care provider.

For example:

When will the urges stop?

How can I keep from gaining weight?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/answersbyheart to learn more.