

The university student's guide to

QUITTING SMOKING

Quit Smoking: Why bother?

Experts agree that quitting smoking is the most significant health change that a person can make. Most smokers are aware of the frightening facts, which are now more visible than ever on each pack of cigarettes. As a refresher for those who may not remember, approximately 45,000 Canadians die each year from smoking-related diseases, and each smoker has a 50% chance of dying from a tobacco related disease if they begin to smoke in adolescence and continue to smoke. These facts may seem abstract and impersonal, but there are a multitude of reasons for a smoker to quit.

Health benefits of quitting smoking

- **Within 20 minutes** your blood pressure, pulse rate and the temperature of your hands and feet will return to normal.
- **Within 8 hours** the oxygen level in the blood increases to normal levels.
- **In 24 hours**, your risk of heart attack starts dropping.
- **In 2 days**, your nerve endings start to re-grow, and your senses of smell and taste improve.
- **In 3 days**, breathing gets easier and lung capacity increases.
- **Within 2 weeks to 3 months**, your blood circulation improves, your lungs work better (up to 20-30% better) and walking gets easier.
- **Within 1-9 months** lung cilia re-grow; coughing, sinus problems and shortness of breath decrease; and energy increases.
- **After one year of quitting**, your risk of heart disease is half that of someone who continues to smoke.
- **Within three years of quitting**, your risk of a heart attack is about the same as someone who has never smoked.
- **After 10 years of being smoke free**, pre-cancerous cells are replaced and your risk of getting lung cancer is cut in half.

INTERESTING INFO

Nicotine is the addictive substance in cigarettes. It is more addictive than cocaine, heroin, marijuana, caffeine or amphetamines. Nicotine itself is not detrimental to health. However, in order for nicotine to be inhaled through the lungs, tobacco is burned at temperatures reaching 1,000 degrees Celsius. At these high temperatures, the 300 or so naturally occurring compounds in tobacco are converted to over 4,000 chemicals, including 43 known cancer causing compounds.

Understanding nicotine addiction

The purpose of a cigarette is to deliver the nicotine that naturally occurs in tobacco leaves to the brain. When tobacco is burned, the nicotine is released as smoke and is inhaled into the lungs. Within 10 seconds, nicotine is absorbed into the bloodstream and is pumped to the brain where it exerts its effect.

The brain controls many aspects of our being, from sleep cycles to sexual function to our heart rate and blood pressure. It does so by relaying messages as impulses along nerve cells. Individual nerve cells do not physically touch each other. Communication between them is achieved through a variety of chemical compounds called neurotransmitters. When a nerve impulse reaches the end of one nerve cell, neurotransmitters from that cell are released into the space between the cells and are recognized by specific receptors on adjacent cells. Once enough neurotransmitters make contact with receptors on adjacent cells, an impulse is generated and the message continues.

When nicotine reaches the brain, it overpowers and mimics the neurotransmitter acetylcholine and stimulates the nerve cells that contain acetylcholine receptors. The amount of nicotine from a cigarette is greater than the amount of acetylcholine that is already there. As a result nerve cells are overstimulated. Acetylcholine receptors are found in a great number of nerve cells. Therefore, the nerve impulses that result from stimulation with nicotine have many effects, including feelings of euphoria and pleasure.

The brain gets accustomed to being overstimulated. As nicotine is used up and levels of the chemical drop, feelings of discomfort result which are relieved by taking in more nicotine. The result: a person continues to smoke to relieve the uncomfortable feelings, and an addiction is born.

WHAT IT COSTS TO BE A SMOKER

Smoking can definitely be a drain on your finances. Have you ever figured out just how much it is costing you? Figure it out:

___ # of packs per week X ___ price per pack X 52 = ___ yearly cost of smoking

Just think what else you could be spending this money on!

How to quit smoking in 3 easy steps

In order to successfully make the transition to being a non-smoker, you need to want it. **In fact, the greatest predictor of whether a person will successfully quit smoking is conviction.** If you really want to quit smoking, nothing will stop you. Let's face it, smoking is a behaviour that is controlled by the individual. No one forces a smoker to smoke: he or she is the only person responsible for smoking. Conversely, no one can make a smoker quit but the smoker him- or herself.

At its simplest, quitting smoking is as easy as never again putting a cigarette to your lips. Many people quit "cold turkey", meaning that once they decide to quit, they never smoke again. However, nicotine is a highly addictive substance and for many people quitting smoking is challenging and requires a great deal of effort. Fortunately, more and more people are taking up the challenge and deciding to become non-smokers. Millions of people quit each year.

If you are a smoker, you should seriously consider quitting. It is clearly the number one thing you can do to improve your health. The following are some suggestions that can help you quit smoking. Think in terms of the **3 M's**: **M**ake the decision, **M**ake a plan and **M**onitor your progress.

Step 1: Make the decision

It is important to reiterate that once you are dedicated to quitting, nothing can stop you. Therefore, making the decision to quit is of utmost importance. Many people mention that they want to quit, but are not yet dedicated. Rather, they are considering the option of being a non-smoker.

In order to become dedicated to smoke-free living, you need to see the benefits of quitting as far outweighing the benefits of continuing to smoke. One excellent strategy is to make a list of the benefits of quitting and a list of the benefits of continuing to smoke. Don't censure yourself. Write down everything that comes to mind for both categories. As your "reasons to quit" list gets longer, your resolve to quit will increase. Review your reasons to continue smoking and find ways to turn them into reasons to quit. For example, if one of your reasons to continue is because many of your friends smoke, you can turn that into a reason to quit by realizing that you will be a role model for them to improve their health. Also, remind yourself that you won't lose their friendship just because you become a non-smoker. If you lose friends because you want to improve your health, they probably weren't good friends in the first place. Put your list of reasons to quit in a place where you will regularly see it, such as next to your bathroom mirror, next to your computer, or on your fridge.

Another strategy to help solidify your decision to quit is to start viewing the habit of smoking in a negative light. Pay close attention to how nicotine dictates your activities. Do you take breaks from work to smoke? Will you not go places where smoking is prohibited? Notice when you cough or wheeze. Look at the smoke as it floats away from your cigarette and become concerned that you are consciously inhaling damaging chemicals into your lungs. If you have children, ask yourself if you would like them to smoke. If not, why then do you continue a habit that you would not want for your children (or your future children)? Read about the negative effects of smoking. You will be much more likely to quit if you see smoking as something negative.

SOME OF THE STUFF IN CIGARETTES

acetone (a paint stripper)
arsenic (a poison)
hydrogen cyanide (poison used in gas chambers)
ammonia (bleach)
naphalene (found in moth balls)
carbon monoxide (found in car exhaust)
pesticides
lead



Step 2: Make a Plan

Once you have set the goal to become a non-smoker, you will increase your chances of success if you have a plan. There are many strategies that can help, and each person needs to tailor their plan to their own personal preferences, lifestyle, smoking pattern and personality. The following are some common, effective strategies:

• **Seek out help**

Get as much information as possible. Check out the Internet, read some literature, or see your health care professional. These sources will provide you with helpful and relevant information to help you become a non-smoker.

• **Set a date**

Pick a convenient day, not one in which you feel you should quit (such as New Year's Day or your birthday). Circle this date in your calendar and tell people that you are quitting on that date.

SOME PERSONAL BENEFITS OF QUITTING

- you will feel in control
- your breath, clothes and home will smell better
- you will breathe more easily
- you will be more rested, relaxed, and energetic
- you will have more money
- your teeth and nails will be whiter
- your skin will age less quickly
- you will have better sex
- you will have fewer headaches
- you will set a good example for others, including your children
- you can expect to live longer
- you will reduce your risk of many diseases including certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, ulcers, and high blood pressure

ON THE NET

Health Canada's smoking cessation guide:
www.infotobacco.com/

Quitnet
www.quitnet.com

Support for those who have quit:
www.quitsmokingsupport.com

• Tell people

Tell others that you are planning to quit and ask for their support. It is particularly important to tell your "smoking buddies". Be prepared to deal with people who are not supportive. Some of your smoking friends might also like to quit but may feel they are unable to. As a result, they may resent your efforts.

• Talk to those who have quit

Former smokers can give you some helpful hints, since they will understand what you are going through. Ask them how they did it, what worked, and what didn't. Find out what barriers they had to overcome, and how they stuck to their decision.

• Visualize yourself as a non-smoker

Competitive athletes often take time to visualise their victory. This gives them a psychological boost and a competitive edge. People who are quitting smoking can do the same. Spend time thinking about what your life will be like as a non-smoker. What will you do instead of smoking after a meal or with a drink? How will you feel? How will your clothes, car, or home smell? What will you do with the extra money you have?

You can do visualization exercises just about anywhere and just about any time, such as on the bus, waiting in line at the bank, or walking home from school. The more you can see it, the more likely you will have it.

• Break the cycle

Smoking is a part of your daily routine. Start to change that routine so that less and less of it is centred around smoking. For instance, if you always have a cigarette after eating, do something different after meals such as going for a walk or calling a friend. Some find it useful to change other aspects of their life besides routine. For example, if you have a favourite chair where you typically smoke, change the position of the chair or cover it or give it away and get a new one. Some people change personal items that they use like shampoo and moisturizing lotion to introduce new scents. Any change you make will remind you that things are now different.

• Reward yourself

Like many smokers, you may view a cigarette as a well deserved reward, or a reason to take a break. As a non-smoker you may feel that you have nothing to reward yourself with, or no excuse to take a break. Finding other rewards will help. Take the money that you would have spent on cigarettes and put it aside. As you watch the money grow, you will feel a sense of reward. Alternatively, spend that money on a movie, a magazine, or something you normally wouldn't buy, but you enjoy. Discover as many rewards as possible and treat yourself. Be careful not to regularly treat yourself to calorie dense foods that can lead to weight gain.

• Use quit smoking aids if you wish

You may wish to make your transition to being a non-smoker easier with some pharmacological help. Three methods exist that can help. They are: nicotine gum, the nicotine patch and the drug bupropion (most commonly known by the trade name Zyban or Wellbutrin). The gum and the patch both deliver nicotine to the brain to help reduce cravings. Both can be purchased at pharmacies. If you get a prescription for either method, you may be able to be reimbursed from your insurance company. Check with them first.

Zyban is a drug used to treat depression, but it has proved to be effective in reducing cravings. It must be prescribed by a physician and is covered under some drug insurance plans.

Before using any of these aids, determine if you are a good candidate and inform yourself about how to use it properly by consulting a health care professional.

• Gradually reduce nicotine intake

Since nicotine is the addictive substance in cigarette smoke, you may find it easier to quit by progressively reducing the amount of nicotine that you deliver to your brain. This is called nicotine fading. Some ways to do this include:

- Switch to lower nicotine cigarettes. The amount of nicotine in a cigarette is indicated on

INTERESTING INFO

The act of smoking does not relieve stress. Instead, a smoker's brain wants nicotine and this creates a state of discomfort that is relieved by providing it with nicotine.

Also, deep breathing is an effective stress release strategy. When smokers smoke they inhale deeply and are helping to release stress. Unfortunately, they are inhaling toxic compounds. Try breathing deeply without the cigarette to relieve stress.



IN THE LENDING LIBRARY

Kick It: Stop Smoking in 5 Days

7 Steps To A Smoke-free Life

The Addiction Workbook

Freshstart-21 Days to Stop Smoking

Quit Smoking Aid	How long to take it	Possible Side Effects	Cautions	Advantages
Nicotine gum	Several weeks to several months or longer if necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burning in throat • Hiccups if chewed too quickly • Potential dental problems 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You can control when to take nicotine and how much • Satisfies oral cravings
Nicotine patch	8-12 weeks or longer if necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local skin reaction • Disturbed sleep, nightmares 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need only apply it once a day • No chewing • Can control your cravings for 24 hours
Bupropion (Zyban, Wellbutrin)	7-12 weeks or longer if necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dry mouth • Insomnia 	If you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink >4 drinks a day • Take St. John's Wort • Take drugs that reduce seizure threshold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improves depression

the package.

- Delay your first cigarette of the day. If you smoke within the first half hour after you wake up, wait an hour. Each day lengthen the time that you delay that first cigarette.
- Gradually reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke each day. For example, if you smoke 20, smoke only 15, then 10 and so on. Only carry your allotted amount of cigarettes each day.
- Don't smoke entire cigarettes. Instead, draw a line half way down the cigarette and only smoke half the cigarette at a time. Later, smoke only one third of a cigarette.
- When you feel the urge to smoke, delay lighting up. Wait another half hour or even longer. Make the time between cigarettes longer and longer.
- Cut out one or more of the cigarettes that are part of your routine (e.g. morning coffee break or after a meal).

• Identify and have a plan ready to deal with potential barriers

There are many potential obstacles or barriers you may face when you quit smoking. Successfully identifying and managing the barriers will greatly increase your success of quitting. Each person has their own unique barriers. Identify your potential barriers and be creative in finding ways to overcome them. When the barrier presents itself you will be prepared to deal with it. The table above highlights some common barriers and suggestions for overcoming them.

• Be prepared to deal with potential symptoms of "recovery"

When you stop giving addictive nicotine to your brain, it is perfectly normal to experience some "withdrawal" symptoms. Rest assured that these will go away; some of them in a day or two, while others may linger for a few months. The receptors that nicotine binds to in the brain are located in nerve cells that affect many different functions, so "withdrawal symptoms" can be quite varied. Some people are more affected, while others experience only a few symptoms or none at all. You may be tempted to begin smoking again to reduce the symptoms, but don't give in. Remind yourself that it is the receptors in your brain that are asking for nicotine, and if you don't give it to them, they will stop asking. The following are a few common symptoms of recovery and strategies to manage them:

- **Feelings of dizziness or light-headedness.** When you smoke, approximately 40% of the oxygen in each red blood cell is replaced with carbon monoxide. Once you quit, your blood cells are finally getting enough oxygen, which could make you feel light-headed. This will pass. At first, avoid activities where dizziness or light-headedness could interfere with safety.
- **Constipation.** When you quit smoking, the movement of your bowels may slow down, leading to constipation. Drink lots of water and eat foods that contain fibre such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans and legumes. Be careful not to take in too much fibre too fast. Instead, increase your fibre intake slowly and make sure to get plenty of water, since fiber draws water into the intestines.
- **Changes in appetite.** This can occur for several reasons: your sense of smell and taste has increased so food tastes and smells better, you need to keep your hands and mouth busy, or slight abdominal discomforts are interpreted as hunger. Drink plenty of water, eat healthy snacks (fruit, vegetables, trail mix etc.), chew well and monitor how often and how much you eat.
- **Increased cough.** This may seem odd, considering you are doing something good for your lungs, but the coughing is actually a good sign. The chemicals in cigarette smoke paralyze or destroy the tiny hair-like cilia that move debris out of the lungs. As these cilia begin to re-grow and function normally, they start to clean out the lungs, and coughing helps with that process. Drink plenty of water to liquify secretions and breathe deeply to access all secretions, including those that are deep in the lungs.
- **Impaired thinking, decreased concentration, feelings of confusion.** Nicotine improves alertness, so when it is removed there may be initial feelings of confusion or "cloudy" thinking. This will soon pass. In the meantime, organize tasks and activities so that they require less mental function. For instance, make a to-do list to keep track of what needs to be done, or put off tasks that require intense concentration.
- **Difficulty sleeping.** Nicotine withdrawal can affect the sleep cycle. Again, this will be only temporary. Consult the "Sleep" chapter for tips on getting a good night's sleep.

POTENTIAL BARRIER	SUGGESTIONS TO OVERCOME BARRIER
Irritability and stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try relaxation exercises such as deep breathing or progressive relaxation (consult the "Stress" chapter). • Tell people that you may be experiencing irritability and ask for their support. • Do something calming such as taking a bath or listening to uplifting or calming music.
Cravings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind yourself that the craving will go away if you wait a few minutes. • Do something to distract yourself such as going for a walk, calling a friend, reading.... • Drink a glass of water. • Do some deep breathing.
Fear of failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind yourself that millions of people quit each year, including those who thought they wouldn't be able to. • Think about other goals you have set for yourself and achieved.
People and situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be necessary during the first few weeks to avoid some people or situations that are triggers for you to smoke. For instance, if you tend to smoke when you have a drink, avoid alcohol for a few weeks and situations where alcohol is served. If there are certain people you associate with smoking, ask for their understanding while you are in the initial stages of quitting.
Gaining weight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remind yourself that you would have to gain about 40 kgs to have the same health risks as smoking. • Many people find that when they quit smoking, they adopt other health behaviors such as regular exercise and healthy nutrition, which lead to achieving a healthy weight. • Remind yourself that about 20% of people who quit do not gain any weight. The average amount of weight gained is 2 or 3 kgs.

TIPS ON GETTING PAST THE CRAVINGS

- chew sugarless gum
- drink a glass of water
- practice deep breathing
- take a bath, brush your teeth
- exercise
- distract yourself
- eat carrot or celery sticks
- do something with your hands like doodle, write or knit

Step 3: Monitor

This is a straightforward step. In order to be a non-smoker, you have to not smoke every day. At the end of the day if you haven't smoked put a gold star or a check mark on a calendar. As you see these build you will build confidence and feel motivated to continue. If you have a slip, don't get discouraged; rather, seriously explore why it happened and make a plan for addressing the cause so that it won't happen again. Don't give up.