

## COPING WITH STOPPING TOBACCO

You are ready to quit smoking. You have identified triggers and learned some ideas for coping with cravings. You need to develop health ways to cope with the demands of daily living, as well as the ever-present messages from the tobacco industry and other smokers. People relapse because they did not learn coping skills that they could use on a long-term basis. Below are some resources to help you prepare for your quit day and beyond.

**Fitness:** Exercise is a key component to weight control and helps reduce stress. Twenty to sixty minutes of continuous aerobic activity, as well as increased daily activity, may reduce the need for weight control, take the edge off the withdrawal/stress symptoms, and help you sleep. If you want to incorporate fitness into your action plan and you are not currently involved in a regular fitness program, it is recommended that you get into a routine at least a week before you quit using tobacco products.

**Weight Control:** Many tobacco users find that the association between tobacco and food is significant and are concerned about weight gain after they quit. Identify coping strategies, practice them before your quit day and incorporate them into your action plan.

**Stress Management:** Stress is often cited as major reason why people relapse. Right now your motivation to quit is pretty high and you don't want to consider smoking as a way to reduce tension. Learn some additional stress management techniques right now, so that in the future, if your motivation is low, you will have some other skills to use that don't include using a cigarette.

## PREVENTING RELAPSE

It is important to remember the reasons you want and need to stop smoking. The first few days to weeks after quitting will be the hardest. It is important to use self-discipline and your most effective techniques to avoid giving in to the cravings. What some people find helpful when urges come include:

- **Take a few deep breaths and let them out slowly.**
- **Think about the most important reasons why you wanted to stop smoking.**
- **Don't let negative thoughts dominate your thinking.**
- **Use a coping strategy from your action plan.**
- **Focus your attention away from the urge (read, doodle, focus on a conversation, etc.) Urges usually peak and subside within 5 to 10 minutes.**
- **Go to a place where smoking is not permitted.**
- **Seek support from a non-smoking friend.**
- **Use a low-calorie substitute for oral stimulation.**
- **Delay your use of tobacco for another hour.**

If you should slip and give in to an urge, don't give up; don't label yourself as a failure, or say "to heck with quitting." Acknowledge the progress you have made so far, and then restart your program by reviewing the reasons why you want to quit and figure out what you could do differently if the same situation should come up again.