

# Smoking Countdown

Your doctor tells you to stop smoking. Your family begs you to put down the cigarettes. Your friends wish you'd quit. But you're not going to stop smoking cigarettes until you're ready to stop.

Why should you stop?

- Put down the cigarettes and you'll live longer
- The people you live with-especially your children-will be healthier
- You'll have more energy and breathe easier
- You'll lower your risk for heart disease, stroke, and cancer.
- If you smoke a pack a day, at \$5 a pack, stopping smoking will save you \$1,825 in just one year

Your first step is to decide to stop smoking. Next, talk to your doctor or contact a clinic that helps people quit. Then, when you think you're ready, SET A QUIT DATE.

## Quit Day minus 5

- List all your reasons for quitting
- Tell your family and friends about your plan
- Stop buying cartons of cigarettes

## Quit Day minus 4

- Pay attention to when and why you smoke
- Think of new ways to relax
- Find something other than a cigarette to hold in your hand
- Think about habits or routines you might want to change

## Quit Day minus 3

- Make a list of things you're going to do with the money you'll save
- Think of whom to reach out to when you need help
- Find a local support group for people who stop smoking or one on the Internet

## Quit Day minus 2

- Buy nicotine patches, nicotine gum, or nicotine lozenges
- Get a prescription for a nicotine inhaler, nasal spray, or non-nicotine pill
- Clean your clothes to get rid of the smell of cigarette smoke

## Quit Day minus 1

- Think of a reward you'll get for yourself after you stop
- Make an appointment with your dentist to have your teeth cleaned
- At the end of the day, throw away all cigarettes and matches
- Put away lighters and ashtrays

## Quit Day

- Keep very busy
- Change your routine, if possible
- Do things out of the ordinary that don't remind you of smoking
- Remind family, friends, and coworkers that today is your Quit Day
- Avoid alcohol

## Quit Day plus 1

- Congratulate yourself
- If you have a craving, do something else-take a walk, drink water, or take some deep breaths
- Call your support network or visit a support Web site
- Find things to snack on, such as carrots, sugarless gum, or air-popped popcorn



# Skills for quitting

You may think of quitting smoking as a skill, but in some ways, it's like riding a bike. You figure out how to move forward, keep your balance, and get where you want to go. And if you should fall; you can get up and keep on going.

## Learn and practice new routines and behaviors

- Plan ways to distract yourself when the urge to smoke strikes: Take a 2-minute walk, call a friend. Use nicotine gum or lozenges.
- Have other things nearby that you can hold in your hands (or put in your mouth), like a pen, carrot sticks, or fat-free popcorn.
- Look for fun activities that don't include smoking to reward yourself and reduce stress: a hot bath, a walk with a friend.

For more help with changing your routines, go to the My Clear Horizon website's *Getting Ready* section and click on Try Habit Breaking.

## Be prepared to manage withdrawal symptoms

- The first few days after quitting, your throat may feel dry and your cough may get worse. This is actually a good sign; your body is clearing mucous from your airways. You may even feel dizzy from the extra oxygen!
- Keep a glass of ice water or juice handy and stock up on sugarless hard candy or gum to handle cravings for something in your mouth.
- In the first week or two, you may have trouble sleeping or be bothered by constipation or gas. Cut out caffeine in the afternoon and evening and eat more raw fruits and vegetables or high-fiber cereal.
- Irritability and tiredness can last for two to four weeks. Don't push yourself too hard at this stage. Take naps if you can. You'll feel better as soon as the nicotine clears from your system and your body adjusts.
- Cravings for cigarettes are usually the worst during the first two or three days. You can wait out the urge by distracting yourself with something else. You might picture the urge as a big wave; if you can surf along with it and keep your balance, it will ebb away in a few minutes.

# **WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS**

Probably every smoker expects to experience some withdrawal symptoms when they quit smoking. While many smokers do experience some, quitting smoking does not necessarily mean you will. Also, you may experience side effects of quitting that may be completely different from another smoker's. Withdrawal symptoms are your body's way of adjusting to being nicotine and tobacco free. Having these effects means that your body is attempting to repair itself from the damage done by tobacco and smoking.

Some common withdrawal symptoms are:

- ❖ **CRAVING CIGARETTES** – This is the most familiar symptom. Try to keep your mind off your craving. You can do this by practicing the four D's when you get a craving:
  - **TAKE DEEP BREATHS** – inhale and exhale slowly
  - **DRINK PLENTY OF WATER** – all day and especially during a craving
  - **DO SOMETHING ELSE**- call a friend, go for a walk, have a fresh fruit snack
  - **DELAY**- and the urge for the cigarette will go away.
- ❖ **TINGLING OR NUMBING SENSATION IN ARMS OR LEGS** – These feelings are the result of the increased circulation in your arms or legs because you have stopped smoking.
- ❖ **LIGHTHEADED, DIZZINESS OR DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING** - These symptoms are due to the increased supply of oxygen to your brain now that the carbon monoxide is gone.
- ❖ **BEING IRRITABLE, ANXIOUS, OR RESTLESS**
- ❖ **FATIGUE**
- ❖ **INCREASED SENSE OF TASTE** caused by paralyzed taste buds repairing themselves
- ❖ **SMOKING PARALYZED THE CILIA IN YOUR LUNGS** – “Smokers cough” is due to these cilia coming back to life and cleaning your lungs of the tar and chemicals in cigarettes. This creates a tickle in your throat that makes you cough.

Remember, withdrawal symptoms do not last long. If you can make it through the first few days, then weeks, off cigarettes you are well on your way to becoming a non smoker. Withdrawal symptoms are most common in the first two weeks after quitting and are mostly gone within one month. This is a relatively short period of time for the body to begin repairing itself, especially if you have been smoking for a number of years.

## COPING WITH CRAVINGS



# Relaxation Techniques

During the first week or two after you quit smoking, nicotine withdrawal can leave you feeling like climbing the wall. If only you could relax with a cigarette the way you used to do! Here are some ways to achieve the relaxation you really crave-without lighting up. These techniques are also good for coping with the insomnia that some quitters feel.

### ■ Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This is a time-tested method for achieving relaxation and relieving stress. There are many ways to do it. Try this one, sitting in a comfortable chair, or better yet, lying comfortably in bed or on the floor:

Begin by closing your eyes and taking a few deep breaths and letting all the air out. Then focus your attention on your feet. Tense the muscles of your feet so that your muscles tighten and your toes curl. Notice how your feet feel when they're tense. Hold the tension for a few seconds and then relax. Feel all the tension leaving your muscles as you relax. Now notice how your feet feel when they're relaxed. There may be warmth, heaviness or tingling sensations. You can do this exercise one foot at a time or both feet together, whichever works best for you.

Now move up your body, tightening and loosening in sequence the muscles of your calves, thighs, buttocks, abdomen and torso. Tighten your hand muscles and work your way up your arms to your shoulders and neck.

Tighten and relax your jaw muscles. Press your tongue against the roof of your mouth and relax. Tense and relax the muscles of your face by making a grimace, and the muscles of your scalp. You may be amazed at how much tension there can be in the facial muscles.

When you have finished this exercise, lie still for five minutes and notice the sensation of your completely relaxed body. If it's bedtime, allow yourself to go to sleep. Progressive muscle relaxation is an excellent sleep aid.

### ■ Relaxing Specific Areas

Progressive muscle relaxation helps you become more aware of the tension in your body. For a quick relaxation, tense and release only those muscles where you notice tension-most often in the shoulders, neck, lower back and scalp. Feel the tension flowing out as you relax.

### ■ Visualization

Here's another relaxation technique: Sitting in a comfortable chair, close your eyes and visualize yourself in a peaceful setting. This could be a meadow with birds singing, a childhood home, the seashore. Feel the peace descending and enfolding you as you notice the sights, sounds and smells of this peaceful place. Take five to fifteen minutes for this exercise.

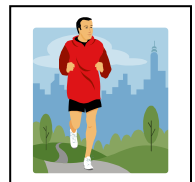
The next time you get the urge to light up, try relaxing instead.



## STAYING SMOKE-FREE

For most people, quitting is not the biggest challenge; it's staying smoke-free. The final key to successful quitting is being prepared to handle difficult situations and to recover if you slip.

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you are at greatest risk for relapse in the *first three months* after quitting. Plan ways you can cope when you are around other smokers or in difficult situations where you're tempted to take a puff.
- If you used to smoke to handle stress or calm your nerves, it's important to find other ways to do that –because stressful things will always happen sooner or later. Try to integrate stress reduction into your daily life. Some people find it helpful to meditate, to do yoga or tai chi, or to go for a run.
- If you do slip and have a smoke, don't beat yourself up, and don't give up. Instead, think of what you can learn from this. Review what led you to smoke. Were you alone, or with others? How were you feeling before and after that cigarette? Did something happen that triggered the slip, such as a stressful time at work or a family fight? Was the trigger a time or place? Plan how you'll avoid or cope with that the next time. Ask for help from friends or experts.
- Limit or monitor your use of coffee and alcohol: these trigger the urge to smoke for many people
- Eat healthy foods and get some exercise to manage your weight and moods. Just walking for ten minutes, three times a day can do it. While some people do gain weight when they quit smoking, research shows that large weight changes are unusual. Using medication also helps limit weight gain.
- Remind yourself of the benefits of not smoking. Think about smoother skin and healthy lungs. Picture yourself not smoking at important events-your friend's wedding, your family reunion.





## Get Support & Encouragement

The second key to quitting: don't do it alone. Research shows your odds are better if you get support from others.

- ➡ Talk to friends, family and coworkers about why you want to quit, and how important it is to you. One way they might help is by writing encouraging notes: "I'm so proud of you for not smoking." "I know you can do it." Post the notes in places you usually smoke-on the coffeemaker, above the TV, on the dashboard of your car.
- ➡ If they are smokers, ask them not to smoke around you and keep cigarettes out of sight. If you know successful quitters ask them for support and tips.
- ➡ Get expert help. Ask a doctor, nurse, psychologist, or other health professional for advice. Look for quit-smoking programs at local hospitals and health-care centers, or through nonprofit organizations. If counseling is not available where you are, or you prefer not to attend a group, try a telephone quit line or Web-based quitting support.

