

# Overcoming Smoking

***Did you know: The benefits of smoking cessation begin within 20 minutes after your last cigarette!***

Quitting smoking means stopping the habit and teaching your brain not to crave nicotine anymore. Most smokers already know that smoking is bad for their health and want to stop. Many try quitting once or twice, or maybe as much as eight to ten times. To be successful, people who want to quit need to have a plan in place to overcome the triggers and cravings.



The health benefits of quitting smoking are significant and start almost immediately:

- **After 20 minutes** – Your blood pressure and heart rate begin to return to normal.
- **After 24 hours** – Nicotine levels in your blood decrease.
- **After 1 to 9 months** – Lung function increases, which reduces wheezing, coughing, and breathing problems.
- **After 1 year** – Risk of heart disease drops to half that of a smoker.

Knowing the stages of quitting smoking can help you go through the process more smoothly and improve your chances of staying smoke-free. Here are the four stages of quitting:

1. **Contemplation:** Starts to think about quitting smoking.
2. **Preparation:** Decides to quit. Starts exploring and organizing strategies to achieve this goal.
3. **Action:** Actively tries to stop smoking. In the first six months, individuals may have withdrawal symptoms. Turn to family and friends for support and use short-term rewards to stay motivated.
4. **Maintenance:** Focuses on remaining smoke-free. Use lessons learned on how to handle temptations/cravings to stay smoke-free.

Coping and overcoming cravings can be challenging when you first quit. Here are 4 strategies you can use to help overcome this:

- **Delay** – Do not smoke when you feel the urge, wait five minutes for the craving to pass.
- **Distract** – Keep your hands and mind busy. Do an activity that will make it difficult to smoke, such as having a shower or exercising.
- **Deep Breathing** – Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds and hold it for 7 seconds. Slowly breathe out through your mouth for 8 seconds.
- **Drink Water** – Occupy your hands and mouth with a glass of water. Drink the water slowly and hold each sip in your mouth for a few seconds.

Finding smoking cessation resources can help you in your journey to quit. Look for what is available through local healthcare resources, such as support groups, counseling services, and educational programs.

Make use of the [Employee and Family Assistance Program \(EFAP\)](#) which provides various service such as counseling and health resources that can help support and help you succeed in becoming smoke-free. By taking advantage of these resources, you can increase your chances of successfully quitting smoking and leading a healthier, smoke-free life.

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