

Breathing Better Living Well

"No Butts About It: Free at Last, Free at Last!"

Getting Ready to Quit

Congratulations! You're thinking about taking those first steps to quit cigarettes! To begin, here are some things you should know about how quickly your health will improve within just 20 minutes after you smoke that last cigarette. According to the Centers for Disease Control, if you stay quit, here is a series of changes that will start right away and continue for years to come.

20 Minutes After Quitting – Your heart rate drops.

12 hours After Quitting – Carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.

2 Weeks to 3 Months After Quitting – Your heart attack risk begins to drop. Your lung function begins to improve.

1 to 9 Months After Quitting – Your coughing and shortness of breath decrease.

1 Year After Quitting – Your added risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.

5 Years After Quitting – Your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker's 5-15 years after quitting.

10 Years After Quitting – Your lung cancer death rate is about half that of a smoker's. Your risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas decreases.

15 Years After Quitting – Your risk of coronary heart disease is back to that of a nonsmoker's.

Source: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Office on Smoking and Health

For further information: E-mail Address: tobaccoinfo@cdc.gov Phone: 1-800-CDC-INFO

DO I WANT TO STOP SMOKING?

So where are you on the scale of motivation?

- Do you know all the risks but you're still prepared to risk many serious illnesses that may come if you keep on smoking?

- Are you thinking about stopping but don't feel that the time is right yet? Perhaps you're waiting until you are pregnant. Perhaps you're going to give it up for Lent or next New Year or when you're less stressed, or when the price gets too high
- Do you think you will give up, but need help to decide to do it?
- Have you finally decided to go for it? Are you trying to stop now but feel you need support?
- Have you already stopped, but feel very vulnerable that you will smoke again if you get stressed or have a drink?
- Think carefully about where you are on this scale and then think about how you could get yourself to the next stage - stopping forever.

WHY IS IT WORTHWHILE STOPPING?

Now we come to the really positive bit! There are lots of good reasons to stop.

- Would you like to live longer? For every cigarette you don't smoke you will gain approximately another 11 minutes of life!
- There are 43 separate potential cancer-causing agents and 550 toxic chemicals in tobacco smoke
- If you stop earlier in life you may save around £60,000, which will go towards enjoying that extra life much more
- You will reduce the risks of tobacco smoke to people around you, including your unborn baby, which otherwise may end up small, premature and with lung problems
- If you are suffering with bronchitis (cough and phlegm every day) this will clear
- You will be at less risk of your lungs dissolving (COPD) as a direct effect of tobacco smoke. Even if you already have COPD, stopping smoking will slow right down the speed at which you are losing lung function
- It will immediately get rid of the toxic levels of carbon monoxide in your blood
- You will reduce the chance of your arteries getting furred up - so a heart attack will be less likely; so will general blockages of your blood vessels, which result in strokes, dementia, impotence and limb amputation
- The risks of cancer of the lung, mouth, gullet and bladder will also be reduced
- Smokers are 22 times more likely to get lung cancer than non-smokers
- Some smokers may be lucky enough not to get any of these diseases but why take the risk? And if you want to continue to be attractive, then it's not a bad idea to avoid that early aging of the skin with wrinkling and shrinking. And you'll also lose that strong smell of tobacco on your breath, in your hair and on your clothes (which you won't be aware of as a smoker).

It's very important to understand that it is never too late to stop smoking.

PREPARING TO STOP

Think of this as a major campaign. When you really are convinced that you are determined enough to go for it, then:

- Set a date that you are going to stick to, no matter what
- Make sure everyone knows, as this will help you to keep that date - and hopefully people won't tempt you by offering you cigarettes
- Get rid of all tobacco reminders in your close environment
- Write out a list of all the really positive benefits of stopping, putting them somewhere that reminds you on a daily basis
- Most importantly, prepare yourself for those withdrawal symptoms and make sure that you have friends and family to support you
- Cutting down is much less likely to work than stopping outright.

GETTING AS MUCH SUPPORT AS POSSIBLE

When doctors help someone to get off heroin, they try to reduce the severe withdrawal symptoms by giving them another type of drug to calm the cravings, which they then need to gradually come off.

The same applies to nicotine and there are now lots of ways of reducing withdrawal symptoms by taking nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) during your most vulnerable early stages of stopping.

Specialist smoking cessation clinics with NRT support give you four times the chance of stopping. And being with others 'in the same boat' means you can support each other.

NRT provides a daily dose of nicotine, which can be tailored to the amount of tobacco you smoke. This helps to ease the withdrawal symptoms while you get accustomed to being an ex-smoker. You may feel somewhat edgy and irritable as you gradually scale down the dose of NRT but it isn't as severe as 'cold turkey'.

[There are a number of systems.](#)

Source: British Lung Foundation <http://www.lunguk.org>

Quitting smoking might be the hardest thing you'll ever do, but it will also be one of the best, if not *the* best thing you'll ever do for yourself. Advice and understanding mean the most when they come from someone who has fought the same battle. Begin by talking to your doctor, then seek out those who *have* been there. It can be done, and *you can do it!*