



# QUIT WITH CONFIDENCE

Guide to a smoke-free life



Health  
Canada

Santé  
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Canada

**Health Canada is the federal department responsible for helping the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.** Health Canada is committed to improving the lives of all of Canada's people and to making this country's population among the healthiest in the world as measured by longevity, lifestyle and effective use of the public health care system.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Do you want to quit smoking?

Quitting smoking can be difficult. Think of it as a new adventure—an important change in your life. While the process to becoming smoke-free may not be easy, **you can quit smoking**. Remember—you have the power to make it happen, and that there are tools and supports to help you.

To get you thinking, consider this:

- What made you seek out this resource today?
- What is making you consider quitting?
- What would give you the final push to quit?

## Take Action!

Use this resource as a guide to help you reach your goals.

This resource will help you:

- Gain the skills and motivation you need to successfully quit smoking.
- Understand what to expect when quitting smoking.
- Create your own quit plan.

Work through the content at your own pace and refer back to this resource when you have a question or need support. Remember, it takes time to change a behaviour. Be patient with yourself and celebrate your wins.

To get one-on-one support from a trained quit coach, connect with your local quit smoking services line at [gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit](https://gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit) or toll-free at **1-866-366-3667**.



## **A note on traditional and commercial tobacco**

Indigenous peoples have been using tobacco traditionally for thousands of years. To many First Nations and some Métis communities in Canada, tobacco is considered sacred. Sacred tobacco is harvested and used differently than commercial tobacco (e.g., cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco etc.). This guide addresses commercial tobacco.

# 2 THINKING ABOUT QUITTING

## Reasons for smoking

When you think about becoming smoke-free, what's holding you back? You may have reasons for why you started and continue to smoke. You may feel it helps you relax, gives you energy, or helps you deal with stress. Smoking could also be something that you share with others in social settings.

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### REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Ask yourself what is keeping you from quitting smoking? Are there things you are worried that you might lose by quitting? Thinking about your own personal reasons for smoking can help you plan how you will quit.

Why do you smoke?





# Reasons to quit smoking

## Health effects of smoking

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of premature death and disease worldwide.<sup>1</sup>

Every time you smoke a cigarette, it harms your health. When a cigarette is burned, you become exposed to the addictive substance in the tobacco, nicotine, as well as harmful chemicals that are created through the burning process, including carbon monoxide and other chemicals that cause cancer (carcinogens). All people who smoke are at increased risk for:

### Cardiovascular diseases

Cardiovascular disease can cause damage to your heart and blood vessels. People who smoke are at an increased risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular issues including narrowing of blood vessels (veins and arteries), blockages in the legs, and high blood pressure.<sup>2</sup>

### Respiratory diseases

Respiratory disease can cause damage to your airways and lungs. The respiratory diseases associated with smoking are often grouped together and referred to as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which includes chronic bronchitis and emphysema. Cigarette smoking is connected to an increased risk of respiratory symptoms, including coughing, phlegm, wheezing, and difficult or laboured breathing (dyspnea).

### Certain types of cancer

Smoking can cause cancer in many parts of the body, including the lungs, liver, and colon.<sup>2</sup> For people living with cancer or those who have survived cancer, continuing to smoke makes treatment less effective and increases the risk of death from cancer.<sup>2</sup>

### Other health issues

Smoking causes other health issues including eye disease, diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.<sup>2</sup> Smoking can also negatively impact your immune system, increasing the risk of respiratory infections.<sup>2</sup>

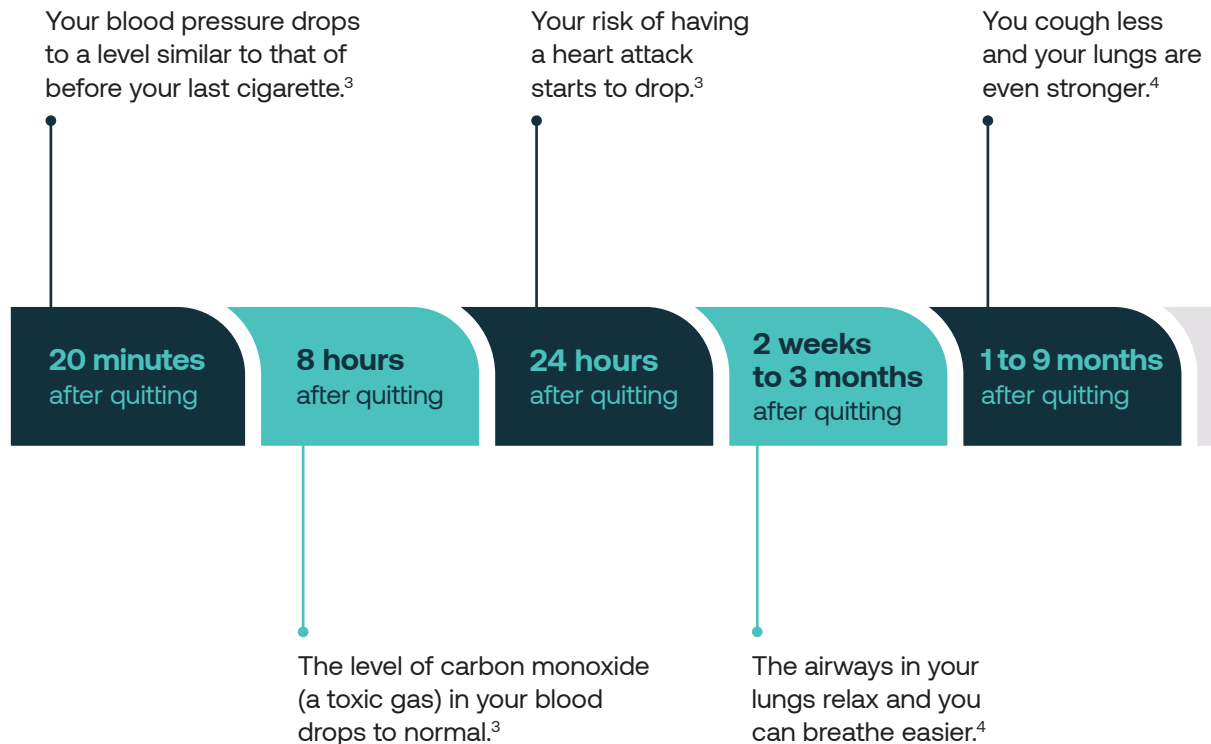
Smoking can negatively affect reproductive health including preterm birth, stillbirth, birth defects, and infertility.<sup>2,3</sup> Smoking can also be associated with erectile dysfunction.<sup>2</sup>

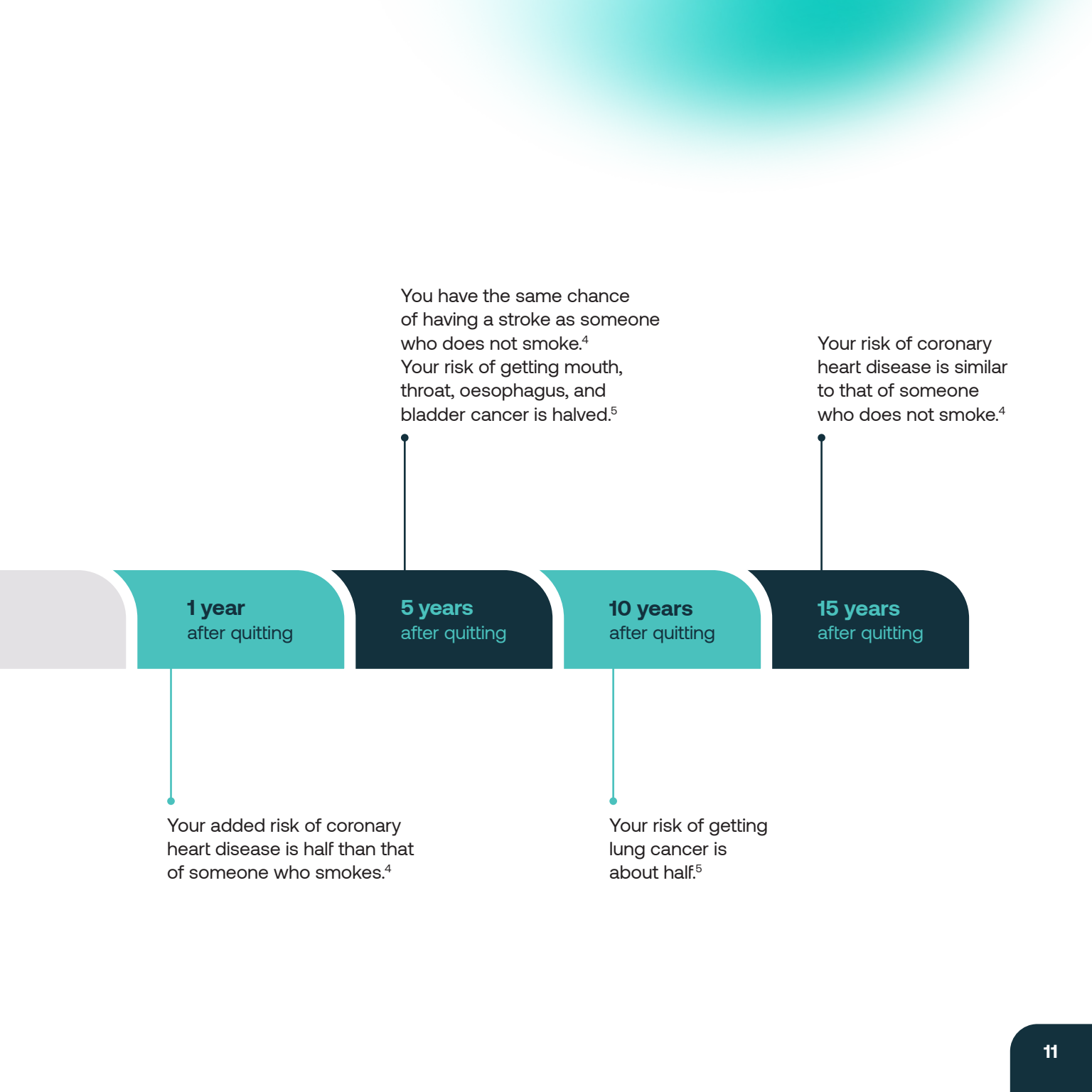
### Early death

Smoking causes a decline in overall health and increases risk of premature death.<sup>2</sup>

## Short and long-term health benefits of quitting

It is never too late to quit smoking. Everyone, no matter their age or situation, can experience the benefits of quitting. Remember, even if you are living with a chronic health condition, quitting can help to improve your treatment outcomes and quality of life.





## It's not just about your health

Beyond improving your overall health and well-being there are other reasons, including social and environmental benefits, to quitting smoking.

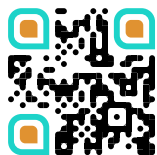
### For me

- **Quality of life:** When you quit, you will begin to feel some benefits immediately, while others may take some time. Some benefits you may notice include a better sense of taste and smell, being able to take deeper breaths, and having more energy.<sup>4</sup>
- **Save money:** Money spent on cigarettes can really add up.

### HELPFUL HINTS



You can calculate how much you spend on cigarettes each day, week, month and year using our **cost calculator**. You can reflect on this number and consider what you could do with this extra money if you quit smoking.



### TESTIMONIAL

I'd rung up a \$13,500 debt, in large part due to my smoking... I'm now down to \$3,000 in debt, with some more likely to come off my paycheck tomorrow.

– Anonymous

### For Others

- **Second-hand smoke:** By quitting smoking, you won't have to worry about exposing family, friends, and others around you to second-hand smoke. Second-hand smoke exposure can lead to a range of poor health effects, including an increased risk of respiratory illnesses, lung cancer, coronary heart disease, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).<sup>6</sup>
- **Social life:** As smoking rates continue to decline in Canada,<sup>7</sup> people are becoming less comfortable with being exposed to tobacco smoke due to its harmful effects.

## The Environment

- **Land and Water Damage:** Growing and producing tobacco involves significant amounts of deforestation.<sup>8</sup> Agrochemicals, like pesticides and fertilizers, are also used in this process. These chemicals harm the land and water and make it difficult to grow food crops.<sup>8</sup> Quitting smoking will help improve biodiversity and the use of land and water.
- **Pollution:** Tobacco product waste, like cigarette butts, make up the highest form of global pollution. In fact, between 25–40% of all litter comes from tobacco product waste.<sup>9</sup> Quitting smoking will lessen the impact of litter polluting the land and oceans.

## Your reasons for quitting smoking

Think about what motivates you to want to quit smoking. You may want to make changes to your health, family, finances, or overall quality of life. If nothing comes to mind right away, that's okay! This means that you should take some time to reflect on your reasons for quitting smoking. We have provided some common examples below.

### Check all that apply:

- Reduce risk of disease
- Better quality of life
- Breathe better
- Save money
- For family or other close ones
- Have more energy

---

## REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Think about your own personal reasons to quit smoking. Write clear statements that are meaningful and motivating to you. Remember that there are no wrong answers. Once you have written down your personal reasons, set SMART goals to motivate you.

**S**

**Specific:** What do you want to do? Be specific about what you want to accomplish by answering the questions ‘what’, ‘who’ and ‘why’.

**M**

**Measurable:** How will you measure your progress?  
Using action words will help you measure your progress.

**A**

**Achievable:** Is this goal relevant and doable?  
Are you willing and able to work towards achieving this goal?

**R**

**Relevant:** Is this goal important to you? Why do you want to achieve this goal?

**T**

**Timely:** Pick a timeframe that is realistic and will allow you to accomplish your goal.

Here is an example of a SMART goal:

I will not smoke after I eat breakfast [*Specific & Measurable*] by showering [*Achievable*] as soon as I’m done eating starting March 1st [*Timely*] to help me start the day smoke-free [*Relevant*].

Why do you want to quit smoking?

What are your SMART goals?



## HELPFUL HINTS



Keep a list of your reasons and SMART goals somewhere handy—on a sticky note in your car, in the notes of your mobile phone or near your workspace. This way, you can always pull it up as a reminder of **WHY** you are quitting.

“

## TESTIMONIAL

I have COPD and I wanted to quit smoking. I had tried many times before to quit without success. Quitting smoking is a lifestyle change and I was determined to succeed.

– *Anonymous*

”

# 3 PREPARING TO QUIT

## Building Confidence—Overcome Concerns about Quitting

Do you have concerns about whether you can or will quit? This is completely normal. Quitting smoking is a big change in your life. You may feel that you are walking away from something that has been a part of your life for a long time, something that you may enjoy or have come to depend on.

It is important to reflect on your concerns and plan to deal with them in a positive way.

CONCERN	WHAT YOU CAN DO
How hard quitting will be	Learn how to make a quit plan, planning ahead can make quitting easier.
Losing an activity you enjoy	Give yourself more time for your favourite hobbies. Create new smoke-free routines that you enjoy.
Reactions from friends who smoke	Be proud of yourself. Find a friend that can support you. There could be a friend that might want to quit smoking with you or ask that your friends not smoke around you.
Returning to smoking after quitting	Be kind to yourself and recognize that quitting takes time. Review your reasons for quitting.
Past quit attempt	Remember that each quit attempt is a step forward. Reflect on any lessons learned from past quit attempts and prepare to quit again by exploring different options or methods.



Remember, quitting is not one big challenge—it is a series of small ones. Take it one minute, one hour and one day at a time. Small changes can lead to big transformations—like quitting for good!

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### REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Use the space below to write down your concerns about quitting and how you plan to manage them. 'If-then' statements can help you do this. Repeat these statements to yourself and imagine acting them out.

Review the examples above and use this template to write your own statements:

If I am concerned about [**concern**], then I will [**what you can do**].

## Understanding nicotine addiction

Every cigarette contains tobacco, and tobacco includes a variety of different chemicals and tar. Cigarettes also contain **nicotine**; an addictive chemical found naturally in tobacco. On its own, nicotine does not cause cancer, heart disease, or respiratory disease—it is the other chemicals in tobacco smoke that do this.

Nicotine can cause physical dependence and addiction. Nicotine enters your bloodstream, and quickly goes to your brain, causing a release of chemicals that can make you feel temporarily energized, happy, alert, or calm.<sup>10</sup> Soon after smoking, the level of nicotine in your system starts to decrease and your brain and body begin to crave it. You may begin to feel uncomfortable or irritable if you try to resist smoking.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup> This is nicotine withdrawal. When you smoke your next cigarette, your nicotine levels increase again temporarily relieving the cravings and withdrawal symptoms you are feeling.

While you may feel like smoking helps to relieve your stress, it is simply relieving the physical and mental stress associated with your nicotine addiction (i.e., cravings and discomfort from withdrawal), which gives a powerful illusion of stress relief. Over time, your body will need more and more nicotine to get that short burst of energy and calming feeling.<sup>10</sup> This creates a cycle of use.

## HELPFUL HINTS

Is smoking your go-to stress management technique?

While you are certainly not alone if you use cigarettes to cope with stress, smoking is not an effective way to deal with stress. See **section five—living a smoke-free life** for more information on quitting smoking and mental health.

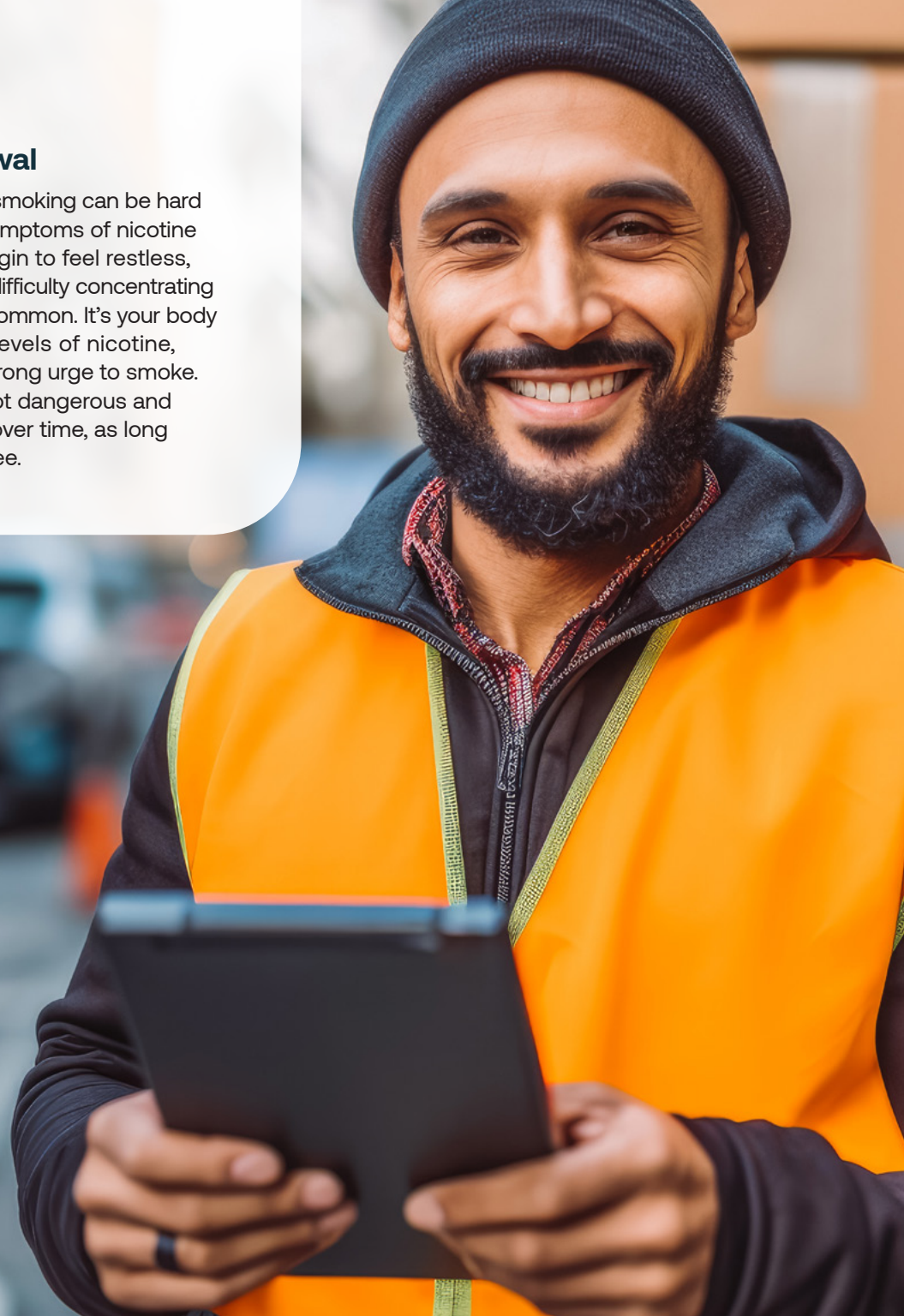
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When you reduce the number of cigarettes that you smoke each day, your brain will get used to having less nicotine in your body.<sup>11</sup> You may get cravings to smoke, but if you resist and delay smoking the craving will only last a few minutes. Over time, the cravings will become fewer, shorter, and weaker. Before you smoke, ask yourself these questions:

- > **Can I go without this cigarette?**
- > **Do I even really WANT to smoke?**
- > **Can I wait or do something else?**

## Nicotine withdrawal

Cutting back or quitting smoking can be hard and may cause some symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. You may begin to feel restless, angry, or sad, and have difficulty concentrating or sleeping.<sup>11, 12, 13</sup> This is common. It's your body responding to the low levels of nicotine, which may give you a strong urge to smoke. Nicotine withdrawal is not dangerous and symptoms will improve over time, as long as you remain smoke-free.





To help you cope or manage your withdrawal symptoms when you feel a strong need to smoke, try the 5Ds.

<b>Delay</b>	Try to delay smoking for as long as you can. Set a timer for five minutes. If you still feel the urge, try to delay smoking for another five minutes. Remember, the craving will pass.
<b>Distract</b>	Do something that requires concentration. For example, play a game, browse the Internet, text and/or call a friend, engage in a hobby or get started on a project.
<b>Deep Breathing</b>	Practice relaxation breathing. Close your eyes and begin by breathing in through your nose expanding your stomach (rather than your chest) and then exhaling slowly through your mouth.
<b>Drink Water</b>	Try to keep your hands busy. Drink a glass of cold water to change the feeling in your mouth.
<b>Discuss</b>	Talk about how you feel with someone, like a friend or quit coach. Discussing how you are feeling can help you understand your urges and manage cravings. You can also take some time to self-reflect. Think about what triggered the feeling that you need to smoke and how you can cope with the situation in the future.

## Identifying triggers and developing coping skills

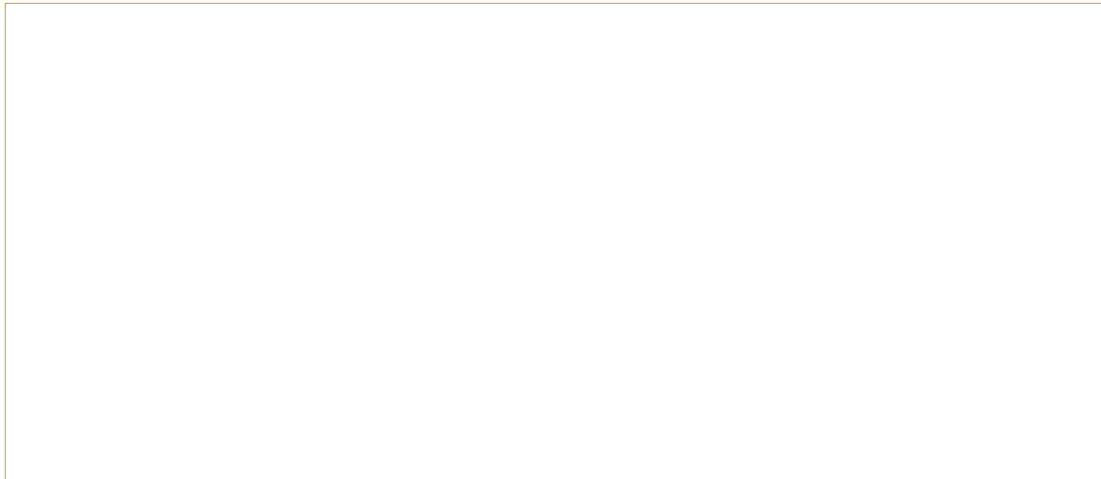
Smoking is often tied to your daily routines. These routines can trigger the urge to smoke. Triggers are anything that you associate with smoking or something that would lead you to want to smoke. For some people, triggers may be associated with certain activities or feelings. For others, they can be associated with people or places. Common triggers include:

- Drinking coffee or alcohol
- Relaxing after work or after a meal
- Talking on the phone or when driving
- Feeling stressed or angry
- Smelling tobacco

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### WRITING ACTIVITY

Learning to recognize your smoking triggers is an important part of quitting. Some people find it helpful to track their smoking by writing down what they were doing when they smoked. This can provide insight into your smoking patterns and routines. Create a list of your unique triggers, below.



## Coping with cravings

Now that you have identified your triggers, you can start to develop strategies to help you cope with triggers and cravings. Remember, cravings are caused by your physical dependence and/or addiction to nicotine and are a normal part of the quitting process. The more you resist your cravings and refrain from smoking, the weaker the dependence or addiction will become.

Here are examples of coping strategies that you could use when cravings hit.



### **Mental coping strategies:** *thoughts* that help you stay smoke-free<sup>15</sup>

- Think about your reasons for quitting smoking
- Remind yourself that having difficult feelings is normal
- Recognize when your thoughts are not helpful
- Think about your future goals
- Think kind thoughts about yourself



### **Behavioural coping strategies:** *actions* that help you stay smoke-free<sup>15</sup>

- Try to avoid people or places that you associate with smoking
- Focus on your breathing or meditate
- Keep your hands busy (e.g., doodle, do housework, wash hands)
- Keep your mouth busy (e.g., water, gum, fruit or vegetables)
- Do something physical (e.g., walking, biking)
- Change your routine (e.g., drink your coffee in a place where you wouldn't be able to smoke)



**Emotional coping strategies:** *feelings* that help you stay smoke-free<sup>15</sup>

- Express your feelings to someone close to you or to yourself through writing
- Praise yourself for the progress you have made
- Use positive affirmations (e.g., “I am stronger than I know”)



**Urge surfing:** mindfulness meditation to help you stay smoke-free<sup>16, 17</sup>

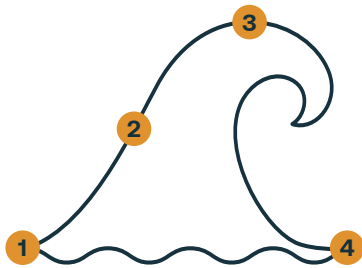
- Mindfulness meditation is the idea of being fully present in the moment without any judgment
- By bringing awareness to the cravings you are experiencing, you are being mindful
- Urge surfing uses the practice of mindfulness meditation to help you stay smoke-free by allowing you to ride out urges until they pass

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## ACTIVITY

Try practicing urge surfing. Picture your urges like waves of an ocean—they start small, grow in intensity, break, and then subside. Urges, like waves, will pass if we do not fight them.

To start, find a comfortable position, close your eyes, and focus on breathing.



- 1. Trigger:** Notice any sensations you may feel in your body associated with the urge. Where is it located?
- 2. Rise:** The urge may become more intense, either gradually or suddenly. Does the feeling change over time?
- 3. Peak:** The urge will reach its peak. Keep attention on your breath and the sensation of the urge in your body.
- 4. Fall:** After you ride the wave, your urge will become more manageable and will eventually fade away.

Practice this strategy often to help you cope with your cravings. Remember to be kind to yourself—mindfulness takes practice.



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## REFLECTION ACTIVITY

Take some time to think about what coping strategies you will use to help you resist the urge to smoke. Don't forget about the 5Ds—they also provide helpful actions for coping with cravings. You can write down your coping strategies and keep a list handy for when you feel the need to smoke.

## Managing relationships with people who smoke

If you live, work, or interact with someone who smokes cigarettes, it can be challenging to remain smoke-free. Don't let this stop you! Here are some tips to help you stay focused on your goal:

- Let the person who smokes know that you are planning to quit ahead of time, so they are prepared for this change.
- Ask them if they would like to quit with you. When you have a quit buddy for support, you're more likely to stay on track.
- Ask them not to smoke when you are around.
- Ask them to not offer you a cigarette, buy you cigarettes or leave them lying around.
- Try to make your home and car smoke-free. If this is not possible, try to create a smoke-free space within your home and remove all lighters, ashtrays, and cigarette packages.



# Choose the right quit approach

Part of planning to quit smoking includes choosing a quit approach that's right for you. Here are some common approaches to help you quit smoking.

## 1. Using a quit aid

Quit aids can help you deal with triggers and reduce your cravings for nicotine. A variety of quit aids are available that can be used in combination with other supports. Ask your healthcare provider about choosing a quit aid that is right for you to increase your chances of quitting successfully.

### HELPFUL HINTS

A great way to get ready for your quit date is to create a quit plan. A quit plan is a set of steps you can use to prepare and help you quit smoking. Making a quit plan and putting it into action can make quitting easier and help you succeed.

Quit plans can take many forms. Scan the QR code and check out the quit plan tool to help you keep track of your reasons to quit smoking, concerns, triggers, coping strategies, overall approach to quitting, tools and supports, and your quit date. As you read through this resource, you can continue to add to your quit plan.



## Nicotine replacement therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is an over-the-counter medication that delivers nicotine to your body in small amounts and can help you control cravings. There are different forms of NRT products available. Using a single form of any NRT can **double** your chance of successfully quitting and combining a long-acting form of NRT with a short-acting form of NRT nearly **triples** your chance of successfully quitting.<sup>18</sup>



### HELPFUL HINTS



To help you remember to take your NRT, try building it into your regular activities such as with other medications or with meals. Talking with a trained quit coach (e.g., doctor, pharmacist, nurse, or with a quit line) can also help you consider other practical tips.

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### Long-acting NRT: Nicotine patch

Nicotine patches are the only available form of long-acting NRT. Long-acting means that patches deliver a steady dose of nicotine as long as you keep it on for up to 24 hours. Typically, you would apply a patch in the morning when you wake up, wear it all day and night, and replace it with a new one the next morning.

### Short-acting NRT: Nicotine gum, inhaler, spray, lozenge, and buccal pouch

There are different forms of short-acting NRT including nicotine gum, spray, inhaler, lozenge, or buccal pouch. While patches deliver a steady amount of nicotine to your body throughout the day, these short-acting forms of NRT are intended to help you control your cravings as they appear. For example, if you feel like smoking, you could use nicotine gum to help the craving pass.



### Prescription medications

There are also smoking cessation medications available that contain no nicotine but can help you control cravings and withdrawal symptoms.<sup>19</sup> The two available in Canada are varenicline and bupropion.

Using bupropion alone can almost **double** your chances of quitting successfully; combining varenicline with counselling can nearly **triple** your chance of successfully quitting.<sup>18</sup>



These medications require a prescription. If you are considering this approach, speak with your healthcare provider who can provide you with additional information about the benefits and potential side effects of taking prescription medications.

## Cytisine

Cytisine is a natural health product that mimics the effects of nicotine, and has been shown to be effective for smoking cessation.<sup>20</sup> As a natural health product, it can be purchased without a prescription in Canada. There is a specific dosing schedule to follow when taking cytisine, so it's important to read and follow product instructions.<sup>20</sup> If you are considering this approach, speak with your healthcare provider or a pharmacist for advice.



## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. Is nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) safe to take?

Yes, NRT products are the safest way to use nicotine.<sup>14</sup> In fact, it is even safe to combine different forms of NRT (e.g., the patch and gum, lozenge, inhaler, or spray). On its own, nicotine does not cause cancer, heart disease, or respiratory disease—it is the other chemicals in tobacco that do this.

### 2. Can I use quit aids if I am pregnant or breastfeeding/chestfeeding?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding/chestfeeding, it is a great time to quit smoking. Counselling is recommended first.<sup>21</sup> If this quit approach does not work for you, speak with your healthcare provider about NRT. Short-acting NRT like nicotine gum, inhaler, spray, or lozenge is preferred over the nicotine patch.<sup>21</sup>

### 3. How do I know which quit aid is right for me?

A quit coach or healthcare provider can help you find what's right for you, even if you've tried to quit before. They can provide you with useful advice and refer you to other sources of support. Even if you have been unsuccessful in quitting smoking with the use of NRT before, consider trying it again, but perhaps in combination with something else.



## 2. Cut back gradually before quitting

If you want to cut back gradually, you can slowly reduce the amount you smoke as you move closer to your quit date. Cutting back allows you to get a sense of what it will be like to quit for good. It also gives you the chance to deal with challenges one at a time, instead of all at once.

There are many ways to cut back. When choosing this approach, try a few different strategies from the list below to see what works best for you.

- Each time you reach for a cigarette, stop, and think, “I’m going to skip this one”.
- Wait five or ten minutes before acting on your urge to smoke.
- Smoke less of each cigarette than you normally would.
- Carry only enough cigarettes to get you through the day, no extras, and do not purchase any additional packs.
- Set SMART goals to reduce the amount you smoke every day or two and cut down as much as you can. Try delaying your first cigarette of the day by at least two hours.
- Begin to change the daily routines that you associate with smoking.
- Set a target quit date and put it in your calendar as soon as you decide and set reminders to review your progress. The date you choose should give you time to prepare and cut back, but not be so far ahead that you lose motivation.

## 3. Quit cold turkey without any quit aids

This means deciding to quit abruptly, without using any quit aids like prescription medications or NRT. This method works for some people, but it doesn’t work for everyone and that’s okay! If you choose this approach, review the section on **Coping with cravings** and find coping strategies that can work for you.

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## WRITING ACTIVITY

In the space below, record which approach(es) to quitting you will use.

### Check all that apply:

- Use a quit aid, like NRT or medication
- Cut back gradually before quitting
- Quit cold turkey without any quit aids
- Other

## Support is available to help you succeed

There are a number of resources that can help you become smoke-free. A sample of the options available across Canada is listed in following pages. Combining different types of support will give you the best chance of success.<sup>22, 23</sup> You can also find local support and services available near you at [gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit](https://gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit).

“

### TESTIMONIAL

I have to say what ultimately worked for me was surrounding myself with non-smokers (including my parents) on Facebook. Every time I had a craving, no matter how early in the morning it was, I would post that I was craving on Facebook on my phone. I got a lot of support that way—but the big thing was, even if nobody replied right away, I felt that I was being accountable to someone other than myself. So that’s what got me through.

– *Anonymous*

”



## Speak to a healthcare provider

Many healthcare providers understand the quit process and can support you along your path to quitting. We recommend talking to your healthcare provider when you are planning to quit. You can connect with supports at many places, including pharmacies, health units, or cessation clinics.

Healthcare providers can:

- Provide advice on appropriate quit approaches and methods
- Follow your progress
- Prescribe stop-smoking medications
- Help manage smoking-related health conditions
- Refer you to other sources of support

## Canadian quit smoking programs

Smoking cessation programs or quit programs are designed to help people who smoke cope with the challenges that arise while quitting. These programs provide you with non-judgmental support and encouragement to reach your goals.<sup>24</sup>

To learn more about the quit smoking services provided in your province or territory, visit [gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit](https://gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit).

## Counselling

Counselling provides one-on-one, confidential, and non-judgmental support to people interested in quitting smoking and can almost double your chances of quitting successfully.<sup>25</sup> Combining varenicline with counselling can nearly triple your chances of quitting successfully.<sup>25</sup> Quit counsellors can help you develop a tailored quit plan, answer your questions, and support your journey through in-person, phone, text or online services. Services can include one-on-one counselling or group support. If you already see a counsellor, share with them that you are going to quit smoking. They will be able to support you through the quit process or refer you to other supports as needed.

### HELPFUL HINTS



Tell your family, friends, and co-workers that you are quitting smoking. Tell them what you plan to do and explain that you might need to rely on them to help you resist your cravings. Do not be afraid to tell your friends who smoke about your decision to quit and tell them how they can help you. Ask them not to offer you a cigarette and not to smoke around you.

## Connect with a quitline

Talking to a trained quit coach can increase your chance of quitting smoking.<sup>26</sup> They can help you develop a plan and answer your questions about quitting. The coach can also provide a choice of services tailored to your needs, including self-help materials, a referral list of programs in your community, and one-on-one counselling over the phone or online.

For more information or to talk with a trained quit coach for free, connect with your local quit smoking line at [gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit](https://gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit) or toll-free at **1-866-366-3667**.

## Phone applications or text messaging services

Apps and text messaging services can provide you advice and useful tips and can help maintain your motivation throughout the quit process. Signing up for an app or text messaging service along with other stop-smoking supports may help you stop smoking.<sup>27</sup>

Consider exploring some options on the Apple App Store or Google Play Store to find an app that could work for you.

## Get ready for your quit day

### Set a quit date

A well-chosen quit date should give you enough time to prepare, but not too much time to lose motivation. Think about the activities that you have planned for the next few weeks to get an idea of when to set your quit date. You may want to find a week when you have fewer deadlines, or plan to begin on a weekend so you can plan some activities that will keep your mind off smoking.

## HELPFUL HINTS



Instead of putting off your quit date, use expected (e.g., quitting on your birthday, New Year's, or another event) and unexpected circumstances (e.g., quitting after a cold or flu when you may not have smoked due to illness) to your advantage.



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## ACTIVITY: COMMITMENT SENTENCE

Just like signing a contract with yourself, put your quit date down in writing. Choose a specific date that is no more than three weeks away. Mark it on your calendars, add it as a screensaver to your computer desktop, or create a reminder on your cell phone, etc.

I will quit smoking on \_\_\_\_\_.

### HELPFUL HINTS



Make your commitment sentence relevant to you. Depending on the quit approach you have chosen, include more details about how you are going to quit using SMART goals discussed earlier in this resource. For example, “I will quit smoking on June 2nd by reducing my daily number of cigarettes by 3 per day for the next 14 days because I want to improve my health.”

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## Change your thinking

In advance of your quit date, change your thinking around smoking. Instead of saying “I will not,” try saying, “I will.”

For example, if you normally smoke after dinner, you could say, “Right after dinner tonight, I will go for a short walk instead of smoking.”

This way, you are able to look forward to another activity, instead of thinking that you are missing out on smoking. Even small changes like this can go a long way in quitting successfully.

## Recognize the skills and knowledge you already have

Think about the times in the past that you have gone without smoking, either intentionally or unintentionally. This can be anything from a quit attempt to not being able to smoke due to smoking restrictions (e.g., being on a long flight). Are there things that you did to keep yourself from smoking? Think about what worked for you and what didn't.

You can also think about other things that you have changed in your life besides smoking. For example, have you recently become more physically active, or have you started a new self-care routine? Think about how you have made other changes in your life and whether you can use these skills to help you quit.

## On the day before you quit

**CONGRATULATIONS!** You're almost there. As your quit day approaches, you may be experiencing a number of different feelings.

You may be feeling stressed, or you may feel that you are about to give up something in your life. This is completely normal. To help you deal with these feelings, remind yourself that you are prepared for this and have the tools and knowledge to succeed. Let your family, friends, and co-workers know that tomorrow is your quit day. Ask them to be understanding if you appear tense or irritable. Let them know how they can support you and that you appreciate their help.



# 4 QUITTING

## Your quit day

### CONGRATULATIONS!

Today is the first day of your healthier, smoke-free life. Celebrate your decision to quit and be proud as it is one of the best choices you can make! You've worked hard to get here.

Quitting may be challenging over the next few days. Make it easier by taking some time for yourself. After all, you deserve it! Walk away from situations that give you the urge to smoke or make you feel anxious and avoid places where you might see or smell cigarettes. Continue to think positively and be kind to yourself.

## Coping with withdrawal

Soon after you quit, your body will continue to crave nicotine and you will most likely experience some symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.

You may have thoughts about having “just one” but do your best to resist. Keep your hands, mouth, and mind busy, and remember to review your list of coping strategies. If you are concerned about any of your withdrawal symptoms, talk to your healthcare provider.

Symptoms of withdrawal appear within one to two days, peak in the first week and last about 2–4 weeks.<sup>13, 28</sup> Learn to recognize and work through them. Withdrawal is a big part of the quitting process, but it is temporary, while the benefits of becoming smoke-free will be with you for life.

# Stay focused and be positive

## Recognize your feelings

Acknowledge that cigarettes were a part of your life and that it is normal to miss them. This stage will pass too; just keep reminding yourself how important being smoke-free is to you. However, if you feel sad or depressed and those feelings don't go away within three weeks of your quit date, discuss these feelings with your healthcare provider.

## Tips to stay focused

Every day without cigarettes is a step towards being smoke-free. So, every day for the next month:

- Remember that **YOU DO NOT SMOKE**. Make this your first and last conscious thought of the day.
- Remind yourself that you do not smoke every time you see someone with a cigarette.
- Review your reasons for quitting, solutions to your concerns, and strategies for coping with urges and other withdrawal symptoms.
- Manage your environment and do your best to avoid situations, people and things that make you want to smoke.
- Remind yourself of the health, economical, and social benefits of quitting smoking.
- Go for walks. Focus on breathing clean, smoke-free air.





## Be proud of yourself

Continue to think positively about the change you have made. If you feel symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, remind yourself that this is normal, and that it can take time to heal.

Remember, every day, week, and month without cigarettes is an accomplishment worth celebrating. Think of a few things you enjoy to reward yourself for staying smoke-free. Rewards are important motivational tools and can be anything that makes you feel good. Here are some examples:

- Talk to an old friend on the phone
- Plan a get-together
- Go see a movie or go out for a meal
- Buy flowers
- Take the night off from studying
- Put the money you save from not buying cigarettes away.  
Add to it every day and watch these savings grow

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### WRITING ACTIVITY

Milestones are key moments and accomplishments you look forward to. Perhaps it's enjoying your morning coffee without smoking or reaching the end of your first smoke-free day or week? Write down some milestones that are important to you and how you plan to reward yourself.

# 5 LIVING A SMOKE-FREE LIFE

## Regaining control if you “slip” or relapse

A slip can be when you have one puff or even a whole cigarette. This does not mean you will begin smoking regularly again; however, it is important to restart quitting right away. Try these tips to help you regain control.

### Regain control of the situation

- Stop smoking immediately
- If you bought cigarettes, throw them out
- Never test yourself. Remove all lighters and ashtrays from your smoke-free space

### Be kind to yourself

- Remind yourself how far you have come, not how far you have to go
- Encourage yourself not to give up

### Take action

- Change the feeling in your mouth—chew gum, drink water or brush your teeth
- Ask for support. Talk to a friend, family member or trained quit coach
- Modify your quit plan by reflecting on strategies that didn’t work for you and building on what helped you

If you feel at risk of relapsing to smoking, connect with your local quit smoking line at [gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit](https://gosmokefree.gc.ca/quit) or toll-free at **1-866-366-3667** or talk to your healthcare provider.

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## REFLECTION ACTIVITY

If you slip, do not get discouraged. This is just a temporary setback. It can take several attempts to quit smoking successfully.<sup>29</sup> Use your slip as an opportunity to reflect and learn and remember how far you have come. Just keep working on it!

Answer the following questions to understand what happened and how to get you back on track:

1. What was your trigger?

2. Where were you?

3. What can you do in the future to avoid this slip?

## Dealing with relapse

A relapse means you have gone back to smoking regularly. This can be frustrating, especially if you have been smoke-free for a while. You may be feeling down or upset. It's important to acknowledge your feelings. Be kind to yourself.

Reflect on what made you start smoking again—it may have been because of stress from work or school, a social situation or weight gain. Whatever the reason, think about how you will avoid this situation in the future.

Don't give up! Remember that you did it once and you can do it again. Remind yourself of your reasons to quit and review sections three and four of this resource. When you're ready, set a new quit date.

## Mental health

Understandably, quitting smoking can be a stressful process. The prospect of dealing with withdrawal symptoms, fear of returning to smoking after quitting, and having to change your routine can feel overwhelming.

However, once your withdrawal symptoms have been managed, quitting smoking can actually improve your mental health. Quitting has been associated with a decrease in depression, anxiety, and stress as well as an increase in positive mood and quality of life.<sup>30</sup>

The causes of stress and anxiety are different for everyone and can add up over time. It's important to take some time to learn about the stressors in your life. Here are some positive ways to handle these feelings and improve your mental health.

### Tips

- Learn what to expect when you quit smoking to help you increase your self-confidence and reduce your stress levels. Think about the skills you've learned so far to help you overcome challenges and build confidence.
- Focus on your breathing and try meditating to help you relax. Enjoy the stillness and peace of mind.
- Visualize a place where you feel calm and safe. Be specific—think about what you might smell, see, feel, or hear.
- Deal with stressful situations by finding someone who you can talk to and discuss solutions with. Remember, you are not alone.
- Make some time for yourself every day to relax and do activities you enjoy.
- Become more physically active. Stretching, walking, exercising, and doing yoga cause the body to release natural calming chemicals (beta-endorphin).<sup>31, 32</sup>
- Be patient with yourself. Accept that it will take time and practice to manage these feelings.

If you need help managing your mental health, talk to your healthcare provider or visit [www.wellnesstogether.ca](http://www.wellnesstogether.ca) for confidential support and services.



## Pursuing a balanced lifestyle

Now that you are on your way to a healthier, smoke-free life, you may be feeling motivated to make other lifestyle changes to improve your overall health and well-being. Here are some strategies to help you pursue a more balanced lifestyle.

<b>Sleep</b>	After you quit, you may have difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep. This is a symptom of withdrawal and will pass. Develop a sleep routine and try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. If sleep issues persist, speak to a healthcare provider.
<b>Physical Activity</b>	Being physically active can help you manage stress, reduce the risk of chronic diseases, and improve your sleep as well as your quality of life. <sup>33, 34</sup> Engage in daily movement in ways that feel good to you, like walking or biking.
<b>Weight Gain</b>	One of the common concerns with quitting smoking is weight gain. When you quit, you may experience an increase in appetite. <sup>35, 36</sup> Create healthy habits while coping with your cravings, like preparing nutritious snacks and having those readily available.
<b>Nutrition</b>	You may have some nutrition-related concerns. Meal timing, nutritional balance of meals, food preferences, access to food, and ability to cook are all factors that will impact nutrition. Try to make water your drink of choice and consume a balanced diet with foods that are rich in nutrients and vitamins to give you more energy and lower your risk of health problems. For additional tips see <a href="http://food-guide.canada.ca">food-guide.canada.ca</a> .
<b>Alcohol</b>	For some people, alcohol can be a trigger to smoking. If you want to stop or reduce your alcohol intake while quitting, develop a plan for how to say “no” when other people are drinking around you.

## Tips for staying quit

Now that you have quit, it's important to **STAY** quit. Use the knowledge, skills and confidence that you have built throughout this process to help you stay smoke-free. Keep this resource handy and whenever you catch yourself craving a cigarette try to refocus your thoughts.

Here are some helpful tips:

- Count on your friends and family to help motivate you. Support can make a really big difference in your success!
- Reward yourself and celebrate wins, both big and small.
- Be self-aware. To increase your chances of quitting for good, pay attention to what you say to yourself. If it is negative, silently say "STOP," and then replace it with positive thoughts.
- Review what you have learned and accomplished. Doing this will help you feel good about your decision to quit and reinforce your motivation to follow through.
- Remind yourself of the positive things you have experienced since you quit.
- Be prepared. Cravings and triggers may pop up. Keep your list of coping strategies handy to help you manage them and remain smoke-free.

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