



Getting ready to quit

Preparation can be the key to successfully quitting smoking, so developing a quit plan is a good idea. Here are some key things to consider in developing your own quit plan.

A QUIT PLAN

Set a quit date

Set a realistic date to quit and stop completely on that day. Choose a day when you have no events that may make it difficult to avoid smoking, such as a party. It's also a good idea not to try to quit just before a stressful event, such as a job interview or exam. Check your house, car, workplace etc and throw out cigarettes, lighter and ashtrays the day before your quit day.

Plan strategies to deal with 'triggers'

If you have quit before, think about the strategies that worked well for you. What were the high-risk situations where you smoked and how can you plan to avoid them? What are the behaviours, eg consuming alcohol, coffee or food, or feelings, such as anxiety or boredom, that trigger your craving for a cigarette? Knowing some of your triggers can help you plan your strategies to manage these situations.

Organise a support network

Tell your friends, family and work mates that you are going to quit. Their encouragement will be helpful, especially during the first two weeks of quitting. Call the advisors at the **Quitline 13 7848** to obtain support before and during your quit attempt.

Create smoke free zones

A ban on smoking in your home and car increases your chances of quitting successfully. Over 80 per cent of NSW homes are smoke free zones.¹ The fact sheet **Car and home smoke free zone** has more information.

Reduce caffeine intake

As your body is removing nicotine you absorb more caffeine.² It may be helpful to reduce your intake of tea, coffee and cola drinks by half. Read the labels on chocolate bars and energy drinks as some of these items also contain caffeine. An increase in caffeine levels may add to your feelings of restlessness or insomnia.

Plan to limit alcohol

For people quitting smoking it's a good idea to avoid alcohol during the first two weeks.³ Alcohol tends to lower one's inhibitions, making it more difficult to maintain the determination not to smoke. It's also a common habit to combine a drink and a smoke, so having a drink with friends who smoke may trigger cravings. Instead of meeting for drinks you could suggest an alternative such as the cinema or an outing to another smokefree place, eg a restaurant, a theatre, a bowling alley etc.

Plan some rewards

A pack-a-day smoker spends about \$70 per week or up to \$3,600 per year on cigarettes. The money that you've saved on cigarettes can be spent on rewards – anything from a cinema ticket to a holiday. Do what works for you to celebrate your success.

Dealing with cravings

Cravings are normal and expected and last only a few minutes. As time passes your cravings will be less intense, shorter and happen less often. You may like to think of cravings as *'time limited desires'*. They usually pass in a few minutes. Some people keep a diary to document how they feel, including the frequency and intensity of their cravings. This may help you to see that things are improving.

If you experienced cravings last time you quit, then using nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) can be a smart move. It is recommended that you use the NRT (patch, gum, lozenge, sublingual tablet or inhaler) for no less than eight weeks after quitting, as this is the best way to manage withdrawal symptoms.

Organise products to help you quit smoking

Using nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to help you quit can double your chances of quitting successfully⁴ and is cheaper than buying cigarettes. The fact sheet **Products to help you quit smoking** provides information about these products and the fact sheet **Nicotine dependence and withdrawal** has a six-question test that will help you to assess your level of addiction to the nicotine in tobacco and to select the most appropriate NRT.

See your doctor

See your doctor before quitting if you are taking medication. Chemicals in cigarettes change the way some medications work. Stopping smoking can be stressful. So if you have suffered from depression, anxiety or other mental illness, ask your doctor's advice before quitting.

Call the Quitline 13 7848

The **Quitline 13 7848** is a free confidential telephone based service primarily designed to help smokers quit smoking. The **Quitline 13 7848** can also provide assistance to the family and friends of smokers and others requesting information about smoking. If you are not fluent in English an interpreter service is available.

By calling the **Quitline 13 7848** (for the cost of a local call) you can:

- > be sent a **free Quit Kit**
- > take advantage of talking to the **specialty trained Quitline advisors**
- > have your **questions** about NRT or other quitting aids **answered**
- > take part in the **free call-back and follow-up service**.

References

- 1 Centre for Epidemiology and Research, NSW Department of Health 2004, Report on Adult Health from the New South Wales Population Health Survey, *NSW Public Health Bulletin 2005*; 16(S-1).
- 2 Swanson JA, Lee JW, et al 1997, The impact of caffeine use on tobacco cessation and withdrawal, *Addictive Behaviours*, 22(1): 55-68.
- 3 Garvey AJ, Bliss RW, Hitchcock JL et al 1993, Predictors of smoking relapse among self-quiters: A Report of the Normative Aging Study, *Addictive Behaviours* (17): 367-377.
- 4 Silagy C, Lancaster T, Stead L, Mant D, Fowler G 2003, Nicotine replacement therapy for smoking cessation (Cochrane Review), In: *The Cochrane Library, Issue 2*, Oxford: Update Software.

A final note

The more prepared and motivated you are, the more likely you are to succeed in quitting. Developing a quit plan can help. The benefits that you have to gain as a non-smoker outweigh the short-term difficulties of quitting.

Becoming a non-smoker is a process and takes time. No quit attempt is a 'failure'. Most smokers make several quit attempts before they are successful. With each attempt they learn more about themselves and how their body and mind react to going without cigarettes.

The first few days after quitting can be the hardest. Remember all the reasons why you want to quit and reward yourself for the progress that you are making. Quitting smoking is the best investment you can make in your health.

Stay positive and be kind to yourself!

For further information contact:

Tobacco and Health Branch,
NSW Department of Health
tel (02) 9391 9111

If you would like to quit smoking contact the **Quitline 13 7848** or speak with your doctor or pharmacist. Visit the website: www.quitnow.info.au