

Smoking and Women's Health: Tips on Why and How to Quit



What does smoking do to my body?

Smoking is the number one cause of heart attack and cancer in women. Smoking hurts almost every organ in your body. It affects your general health and causes many diseases. About 1 out of every 5 deaths in the United States is linked to smoking. When you smoke, your blood vessels narrow. This doubles your chance of having a heart attack and/or stroke. Smoking causes at least 12 different kinds of cancer and many different diseases of the lungs. You also get yellow teeth, have more wrinkles, and decrease the strength of your bones.

What should I do when I decide I want to quit smoking?

S = Set a quit date.

T = Tell family, friends, and coworkers that you plan to quit smoking.

A = Anticipate the struggles you will face.

R = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco from your home, car, and work.

T = Talk to your health care provider about help.

Can calling a quitline help me quit smoking?

Yes, you can call a quitline to talk with a counselor who will help you make your quit plan and give you information and support. Calling a quitline is free and confidential. People who call a quitline are more likely to quit smoking than those who try to quit smoking on their own. The number for the national quitline is 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). There is also a Spanish-language quitline; the number is 1-855-DÉJELO-YA (1-855-335-3569).

Can I take medicine to help me quit smoking?

Many women quit smoking without taking medication. But if you have tried several times and find you can't stop, there are several different types of medicines that can increase your chances of quitting. Most of the drugs belong to a group called nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). Gum, patches, and lozenges you suck on are examples of NRT that you can buy without a prescription. There are also nasal spray and inhaler NRTs, but you need a prescription to get these products. Bupropion SR (Wellbutrin, Zyban) and varenicline (Chantix) are prescription medicines that do not contain nicotine. They lessen withdrawal symptoms and help decrease the urge to smoke. The risks and benefits of using any of these medicines should be discussed with your health care provider.

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding and want to quit smoking?

It is best to quit smoking before you get pregnant, but it helps to quit at any time during your pregnancy. When you smoke, you are more likely to have trouble getting pregnant, have problems during pregnancy, and have a baby who is too early or too small. A newborn whose mother smoked while she was pregnant or is around a lot of cigarette smoke is more likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Your baby also may be cranky and get sick more often. Counseling is the safest and most helpful way to quit smoking while you are pregnant. If you can't quit smoking on your own or with counseling, NRT products can be considered while you are pregnant and breastfeeding. You should discuss the risks and benefits of NRT with your health care provider. Also, set a goal or reward for yourself. For example, if you quit smoking by a certain date for a certain length of time, use your cigarette money to buy yourself something special.



What can I do to help myself quit smoking, and how can I handle withdrawal symptoms?

Common Reasons Women Have Trouble Quitting Smoking	Solutions
Lack of support	Call the national quitline. Find a friend you can call when you need a cigarette. Talk to a counselor or find a support group to join.
Weight gain	Eat a low-calorie diet, do some exercise most days of the week, and/or work with a therapist to train your body on how to handle cravings for a cigarette.
Living with people who smoke	Ask the people you live with to help you quit. Give them specific ways they can help you like not buying you cigarettes or not smoking around you.
Feeling irritable, depressed, and/or nervous	Do meditation or slow, deep breathing. Take a walk or exercise. Take a hot bath.
Nicotine cravings	Chew gum, suck on hard candy, or chew on vegetables, fruits, or nuts. Remember, these symptoms will become less over time.
Being bored	Have planned activities. Stay busy!
Cravings	Avoid doing things and going to places that will increase your desire to smoke, like drinking alcohol, spending time at places that you used to smoke, or spending time around other people who smoke.

Remember... YOU CAN DO IT!

Quitting smoking isn't easy. Sometimes it takes more than one try to quit for good. Each time you try to quit, you learn something new. So if you do not succeed on the first or second try, don't stop trying. Remember that it can be done, and many other people have quit smoking.

For More Information

These Web sites have many tools to help you quit smoking today and deal with challenges that you may face.

www.cdc.gov/tips

www.smokefree.gov

www.quitnet.com

www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/smoking

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