

Tobacco Use: Common Questions & Concerns

I want to quit but a cigarette is my closest companion and friend. I have them with me wherever I go. What am I going to have to do to get them out of my life?

One thing that you can do is to list your reasons for wanting to quit and review them during the quitting period. Making plans for how to deal with problems you will encounter before you quit is important. Think about what triggers you to smoke and what you can do instead of lighting a cigarette at those times. Think about the routines and rituals associated with your smoking that you will need to change during the process of quitting.

I just don't think I can do it. I tried to quit once. I was very irritable and only able to stop for two weeks.

Most people do not succeed the first time they try to quit, but many are successful if they continue to try. Most users make several attempts before succeeding. The fact that you have tried, and were able to go for two weeks is very positive. You are closer to being tobacco-free. Think about your quit attempt. What worked---what didn't---and use that experience to plan for your next attempt. There are a number of medications that can help to reduce the withdrawal symptoms. Talk to your healthcare provider about available choices.

This is a bad time for me to try to quit. I am way too busy and have too much stress in my life right now.

Using tobacco doesn't help with stress. It just relieves the nicotine withdrawal symptoms when you haven't used tobacco for a while. It is common to use tobacco when things get tough because of your dependence on nicotine. Once you are tobacco-free your stress levels will eventually fall below what they were as a stressed-out tobacco user.

I smoke only low tar/nicotine cigarettes. I know they are healthier for me.

People who use low tar/nicotine cigarettes smoke more cigarettes and inhale more often and more deeply to compensate for low nicotine levels in these cigarettes. They end up getting the same tar/nicotine levels as they would with higher tar/nicotine brands.

My spouse (closest friend) smokes.

Is he/she willing to stop when you do? If not, ask him/her to assist you in your effort. Ask

him/her not to smoke or leave cigarettes around you. Establish no smoking zones in the home. Explain that you are doing this for yourself and not to put any pressure on them.

Won't I gain weight if I stop smoking?

Many tobacco users gain weight when they quit, but it is usually less than 10 pounds. Don't attempt to diet when first stopping-that can be done when you are an established nonuser. Avoid high-calorie snacks. Exercise is an effective technique to help cope with withdrawal symptoms and life stress and also to help reduce weight gain. Some of the medications to help you quit may limit weight gain while you are taking them.

My friend who quit smoking was very irritable and had a hard time concentrating. Will that happen to me if I quit?

Irritability and loss of concentration are normal symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. Some users have few or no withdrawal and some have a number of symptoms. Some other physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms are nervousness, light-headedness, sleep disturbances, fatigue, constipation, mouth sores, headache, hunger, depression, and cravings. Most symptoms pass within two to four weeks after quitting. When you do decide to quit, talk to your healthcare provider about different medications that can help to reduce withdrawal symptoms.

I'm 60 years old. My body is too old to recover from years of smoking.

Many of the effects of tobacco use are reversible after cessation, at any age. After quitting there is a decreased risk of many of the effects of tobacco use including cancer, heart conditions, lung diseases, oral cancer and gum disease.

Should I tell other people I'm trying to quit?

Yes. You should enlist family, friends and coworkers who would be supportive.

I use snuff. I thought I would be able to quit anytime I wanted to. I tried cold turkey but didn't last two days.

Smokeless tobacco is as addictive as smoked tobacco, heroin, and cocaine. When you are ready to quit, talk to your healthcare profession about referring you to a helpline and discuss some smokeless tobacco alternatives and medications that might be helpful to help you quit.

Prepared 28 July 2008

Reviewed/Revised 11 November 2015

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