



Helping others quit

Understanding smokers

People smoke because:

- They are addicted. Nicotine is one of thousands of chemicals in cigarettes. It's addictive and causes most of the withdrawal symptoms when smokers first stop.
- It is a habit. Habits help create needs or cravings and smokers are trained to think they can't do some things without a cigarette. Smoking becomes so automatic that smokers don't even notice they've lit a cigarette.
- It is associated with feelings. Cigarettes are often connected with moods or feelings. People may smoke for pleasure when they're happy or for comfort when they're sad; for a break when they're tired or for something to do when excited.
- Most people smoke for a combination of reasons. Identifying which aspects of smoking are most relevant to them will help smokers plan for a future without tobacco.

It's difficult to watch someone you care about damaging their health by smoking.

You can assist a smoker to make the decision to quit and provide support and encouragement once they have stopped smoking.

The facts

Smoking leads to cancer, heart disease, emphysema, reduced circulation, lowered fertility, pregnancy problems and premature ageing. The good news is that much of the damage caused by smoking is reversible, and the earlier a person quits, the more chance their body has to repair itself.

As soon as a person stops smoking, their body begins to recover:

- within a few hours, all the nicotine is out

of the system.

- in a few days, skin will be clearer, breath fresher, and your sense of smell will be better
- within two months, circulation is getting back to normal and blood flow to the feet and hands has improved
- after 12 months, the risk of sudden death from heart attack is down to almost half that of a smokers.

More money

Quitting smoking will mean that you have much more money to spend on other things. It's like getting a pay rise of \$3,102 a year if the smoker smokes 20 cigarettes a day.

Taking control

Stopping smoking is a challenge. Being successful in quitting helps the smoker take on other challenges.

Helping the smoker decide to quit

If you are concerned about someone you know who smokes:

- don't become involved in arguments about smoking. Chances are that, underneath the bravado, the smoker knows as well as you do that smoking is anti-social, a health hazard or whatever. Disagreements only make smokers more defensive and more likely to keep on smoking
- avoid nagging. It achieves little and often results in both parties feeling angry. Express your opinion clearly and simply, in a way that shows that you care
- let your friend know (tactfully) that there are self-help and group organisations which can give support to people quitting smoking. For example, the Quitline (0800 778 778) provides quit advice and support as well as

very cheap nicotine patches and gum. Introduce them to someone who has quit smoking.

Once the smoker has decided to quit

Stopping is quite easy for some smokers and a massive task for others. Most smokers have tried to stop at least once before. Everyone is different and the advice which one person finds invaluable, another may find ineffective.

Whether or not a smoker will succeed in quitting has a lot to do with how the people around him or her react to the decision. Some people will be very supportive – others will, consciously or unconsciously, work to undermine the smokers plan to become a non-smoker. If you want to make sure you're helping, rather than hindering:

- Provide support, understanding and encouragement – even when they slip up. Most smokers make several attempts before they are able to stop completely, but every attempt is a step in the right direction and will make it easier for them to stop next time around. Criticism, on the other hand, is counterproductive - it just makes the smoker less likely to try again.
- Help them to follow through with planned quitting strategies. If they have decided to avoid tempting situations, such as pubs or parties, suggest some alternative activities that you could enjoy together. Suggest a restaurant, a movie or a play. If they have decided to take up exercise and need encouragement then offer to go along – it won't do you any harm either.

- Just be there. Sometimes, a person who's trying not to smoke just needs someone to talk to.
- Remember people concerned about weight gain can nibble on low calorie snacks like fresh fruit or raw vegetables – or sip a glass of water. It is also important to keep busy – do a crossword, knit, do some gardening.
- Frustration and irritability may be part of the withdrawal process. Like all withdrawal symptoms they are temporary. Make allowances for smokers trying to quit. Treat them every now and again to make up for feeling deprived.

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**For more help, call the Quitline
0800 778 778.**

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