
Smoking - quitting tips

Summary

- About 81 per cent of Victorians who smoke have tried to stop at least once, while around half try to quit each year.
 - Quitting can take a number of attempts.
 - If you do have a cigarette, it's not the end of your quit attempt. A slip-up is a setback, not a defeat.
 - Helpful strategies include nicotine replacement therapy and talking with a trained quitting advisor.
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People who smoke often make several attempts to quit before they succeed. Following some simple strategies and getting some support when you need it can help you to stop smoking completely.

You can get useful tips and support by:

- calling the Quitline
- talking with a health professional trained to help you quit
- using SMS or internet quitting tools.

Nicotine replacement therapy is available from pharmacists and supermarkets. Your doctor can also prescribe medication or subsidised nicotine patches to help you quit.

Wanting to quit smoking

Around 13 per cent of the Australian population smokes every day and most people who smoke want to quit. According to Quit statistics, 81 per cent of Victorians who smoke have tried to kick the habit at least once. About half try to quit each year.

Successful quitters see their past attempts as practice and experience to learn from and build on. Some people find that going 'cold turkey' – quitting completely and immediately – is a successful method for them. However, if you haven't succeeded in stopping smoking on your own, using quitting services and medication may increase the likelihood that you will quit successfully.

Benefits of quitting smoking

Quitting at any age will reduce your risk of:

- heart disease
- stroke
- cancer
- chronic bronchitis, and several other health conditions related to smoking.

The earlier you quit, the greater the health benefit.

Your health will improve in the first few months after quitting. Your heart and lungs will benefit. Blood flow to your hands and feet will increase, and your immune system will improve.

Quitting can be stressful at first, but after six months, your stress levels and mood may be better than when you smoked.

People who quit smoking by the age of 30 avoid most smoking-related disease. They live, on average, 10 years longer than they would have if they had kept smoking. Even quitting at the age of 60 means that, on average, you are healthier and live a few years longer.

If you already have a smoking-related disease, quitting will improve your condition and help with your treatment, compared to someone who keeps smoking.

Deciding to quit smoking

Motivation is central to quitting smoking. First, work out the main reasons you want to stop. Take a piece of paper. On one half, write down the reasons you smoke, and on the other half, write down all the reasons you can think of to quit. Now you have a clearer idea of what you will lose and what you will gain from stopping smoking.

Circle the most important reason for you to quit. Write it down on a separate piece of paper and keep it where you can easily look at it when you need to. If you seem to have more reasons to smoke than quit, you may want to talk to someone about this, such as your doctor or a **Quit Specialist at Quitline**.

Barriers to quitting smoking

Many people keep smoking because they feel it helps them in some way, or they are afraid of the possible side effects of quitting. Some common concerns include:

- the need for cigarettes as stress relief – there are plenty of other ways to relax that are good for your body, such as exercising and meditating
- the fear of weight gain – the best approach is to focus on how you look and feel physically, rather than your weight. There are things you can do to help maintain your weight
- the fear of depression – within a few months people who successfully quit smoking are less likely to have depression and generally have a better mood and quality of life. For people with a mental illness or who have had a mental illness, special support is available through your doctor and the Quitline
- the fear of withdrawal – nicotine is an addictive drug and the effects of withdrawal can be unpleasant. However, these symptoms are only temporary and using quitting medications can lessen the effects.

Tips for quitting smoking

Planning how you are going to quit can be very useful. Here are some suggestions to get you started.

What advice or help would be useful for me?

- Get the help that suits you best. You can get practical advice and support from:
 - your doctor
 - the Quitline telephone service (Tel. 13 7848) – for the usual cost of a call from your phone, Quit Specialists provide advice, encouragement and support to help you quit
 - other trained health professionals.
- Quitline also provides a call-back service, a free Quit pack and information on Quit courses. Find out more about Quitline, QuitCoach and QuitTxt on the Quit website.
- Tell your family and friends of your intention to stop smoking and ask for their encouragement. Don't underestimate the value of support from family and friends.
- Use tools. There are many tools and much help available for you such as apps (you can download MyQuitBuddy from the App Store or Google Play), the Quitline (call 13 7848) and the Quit website, where you can also find QuitTxt and QuitCoach.

How do I plan to quit?

- Think about prior attempts to quit and what went wrong. Plan how to avoid the same pitfalls this time.
- Decide on your strategy. For example, do you intend to go cold turkey, use nicotine replacement therapy or use an SMS or internet advice service such as QuitTxt or QuitCoach? Decide if you need to make an appointment with the doctor or buy your nicotine replacement therapy before you intend to quit.
- Write a list of all the reasons why you want to stop smoking and refer to this list whenever you feel tempted to light up a cigarette.
- Decide on a quit date and stick to it.
- Throw away all cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays in your home and car. If your partner smokes, suggest that

they stop too, or only smoke outside the house and away from you.

- Plan for situations that you know make you want to smoke.

How do I keep on track?

- Avoid possible weight gain by eating more fruit, vegetables and wholemeal cereals, and less processed food that is high in fat and sugar (such as chips, biscuits, lollies and soft drink). Do some exercise you enjoy, such as walking or swimming.
- Your body will absorb more caffeine than usual after quitting. Cut down on coffee and tea to prevent caffeine-induced anxiety and restlessness.
- Treat yourself with the money you have saved. Your efforts deserve to be rewarded.
- Remember, if you do have a cigarette, it's not the end of your quit attempt. A slip-up is a setback, not a defeat. Take note of what your triggers may be and plan how to avoid these in the future. After a slip-up it is safe to keep using quitting medications, including nicotine replacement products, and to keep trying to quit.
- The Quit website [<https://www.quit.org.au/landing/stick-to-quitting>] has many tips to help you deal with problems with quitting as come up.

Dealing with cravings when quitting smoking

Cravings only last a few minutes. Get through them by using the 4Ds:

- **Delay** acting on the urge to reach for a cigarette.
- Take **deep** breaths.
- **Drink** water.
- **Do** something else to occupy your mind while your craving passes.

Nicotine withdrawal when quitting smoking

Nicotine is the addictive substance in cigarettes that makes people who smoke want to keep on smoking. Withdrawal symptoms are the way your body reacts when it stops getting nicotine and all the other chemicals in tobacco smoke.

Quitting smoking 'cold turkey' means suddenly stopping smoking without help. This is a popular quitting strategy, but it doesn't work for everyone. Some people are so irritated by the associated withdrawal symptoms that they start smoking again.

Nicotine replacement therapy

There is a range of nicotine replacement therapy products that can ease the withdrawal symptoms when you stop smoking, and increase your chances of success.

Nicotine replacement therapy products include:

- nicotine skin patches
- nicotine chewing gum
- nicotine lozenges
- nicotine mouth spray
- nicotine inhalator.

For people who are dependent on nicotine, using a nicotine patch with another low dose nicotine product can better their chances of quitting over using one product alone.

Nicotine products are available over the counter from pharmacists and some are available at supermarkets. Nicotine patches are now available at a reduced cost through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). See your doctor for a prescription.

Prescription drugs for quitting smoking

The prescription medications bupropion (brand name Zyban) and varenicline (brand name Champix) can also

reduce some nicotine withdrawal symptoms. Together with counselling, these medications can increase your chances of stopping smoking. They are approved by the PBS, and must be prescribed by your doctor as they are not suitable for everyone and can trigger strong side effects in a small number of people.

It is important that you read all of the Consumer Medicine Information that comes with the medications and talk to your doctor about any symptoms that worry you. This information is printed for you at the pharmacy when the prescription is being filled.

E-cigarettes

An e-cigarette is a battery-powered device that heats a liquid (called 'e-liquid') to produce a chemical vapour, which the user inhales into their lungs. This is known as vaping. The ingredients in e-liquids vary, but they typically contain a range of chemicals including solvents and flavouring agents, and may or may not contain nicotine.

Under Australian poison laws, it is generally illegal to sell, possess or use e-liquid containing nicotine. Products used for quitting smoking that contain nicotine must be approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) before they can be legally sold. The TGA has not approved any e-cigarettes to date.

Currently there is no conclusive evidence that e-cigarettes can help smokers to quit smoking, and there is growing evidence that young people who use e-cigarettes may have an increased risk of taking up smoking.

E-cigarettes contain potentially toxic chemicals and the long-term health effects of e-cigarettes are unknown. E-cigarettes must be kept out of reach of young children as they have caused many cases of nicotine poisoning, including the death of a toddler in Victoria.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- Your **pharmacist**
- **Quitline** Tel. **13 7848**

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