

Quitting smoking

Why should I quit smoking?

There are many reasons to quit smoking. For many people, these include:

- Improve your health and lower your risk of smoking-caused illness, like heart and lung diseases, throat and oral cancer, and emphysema
- Improve your finances by saving the money that you spend on cigarettes
- Be a positive role model for friends and family
- Be more confident and in control of your own life
- Have an improved sense of taste and smell
- Heal faster and have fewer complications after surgery

When is the best time to quit?

It is always a good time to quit. The health benefits of quitting smoking start the first day you quit, with increased oxygen in the blood and lower blood pressure. Within 1 year of quitting, your risk of having a smoking-related heart attack decreases by half. Ten years after quitting, your risk of lung cancer decreases by half. After 15 years smoke-free, your risk of a heart attack is the same as that of someone who never smoked.

How can I get ready to quit?

Planning can help you succeed. Here are some steps to take:

1. Get motivated

To help you stay motivated, make a list of the reasons you want to quit smoking. Keep the list handy as a reminder.

2. Pick your quit day

Pick the day you're going to quit. Try to pick a day that is no more than 2 weeks away so you do not lose your motivation. Set yourself up for success by choosing a stress-free quit day so there will be fewer things to tempt you away from your goals. Remember, there is no perfect time so pick your day to quit now.

3. Choose your quit methods

Choose the methods you want to use to help you quit smoking. Methods include nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), prescription medications and counselling.

4. Build your support network

Quitting is easier when you have friends and family to support you. Surround yourself with positive people who want to see you succeed. Tell your friends and family about your goal and how they can best support you. They may talk you through a rough patch or give you a pep talk when you're struggling with a craving.

5. Plan for triggers

Certain situations, places, or moods can "trigger" an urge to smoke. Think about what your triggers are and plan how you will cope with each one.

6. Manage withdrawal

When you quit smoking, your body has to adjust to being without nicotine. You will likely experience symptoms of nicotine withdrawal as this happens. Learn what to expect and how you can make it better. For example, irritability is a common withdrawal symptom. Deep breathing helps many people cope with this symptom.

7. Go easy on yourself

Quitting is a process and it isn't always easy. You may slip up and have a cigarette, but that doesn't mean that you've failed. Use the slip as an opportunity to learn what works for you and what doesn't, and keep trying.

How can I quit smoking?

Quitting can be challenging, but there are many tools available to help you quit. Some people choose to quit cold turkey, without any aids, but you'll have a higher chance of success by using one or more of the methods below.

- Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT), such as the nicotine patch or gum

- Prescription medications that can help reduce cravings and symptoms of withdrawal
- Counselling and support, whether in-person, over the phone, or via text or chat

Different methods of quitting smoking work for different people. You may find that a combination of quitting methods work for you. The best chance for success is combining a form of quit aid, either NRT or medication, with coaching/counselling and support.

Try not to think of quitting as an all or nothing occurrence. It's a gradual process that can take many attempts and different combinations of methods before you find one that works for you..

How can medications help me stop smoking?

Medications can help reduce cravings for nicotine and make your withdrawal symptoms less intense.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products, such as the patch or gum are non-prescription medications that contain nicotine. They reduce cravings by giving the nicotine you would get through smoking, but none of the toxins that are in tobacco smoke.

Two quit medications prescribed in B.C. are bupropion (Zyban®) and generic varenicline. They do not contain nicotine but work in the brain to manage withdrawal symptoms and nicotine cravings and can reduce the urge to smoke. See your health care provider to discuss if these are a good choice for you, and to get a prescription.

What programs are available in B.C. to help me stop smoking?

QuitNow

QuitNow provides support and resources for all people who use tobacco or e-cigarettes. It supports you if you want to quit, reduce your use or you are still thinking about it. Trained quit coaches work with you one-on-one to stick to your quit plan and help you through rough patches. The website and online community provide information and motivational support to guide your quit. Features include:

- Creating a personalized Online Quit Plan
- Motivational support by text or email- text QUITNOW to 654321
- Individual support from a quit coach, by phone or live chat on the QuitNow website call toll-free 1 877 455-2233

- A safe and friendly online community for you to share your story and get support from others on the same journey

For more information visit www.quitnow.ca

B.C. Smoking Cessation Program

The PharmaCare BC Smoking Cessation Program helps eligible B.C. residents who want to stop smoking or using other tobacco products. It covers the cost of one of two treatment options outlined below:

- Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products such as patch or gum
- Prescription smoking cessation medications

For NRTs, see a community pharmacist. For prescription medication, see your doctor. For more information, visit

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/health-drug-coverage/pharmacare-for-bc-residents/what-we-cover/drug-coverage/bc-smoking-cessation-program

Your health care provider

Your pharmacist, dentist, counsellor or another health care provider may also have advice for you on the best option or combination of options for you.

For First Nations, Métis and Inuit people

For help to quit commercial tobacco, including coverage for NRTs, please visit First Nations Health Authority: Respecting Tobacco at www.fnha.ca/wellness/wellness-and-the-first-nations-health-authority/wellness-streams/respecting-tobacco.

In this HealthLink BC file, smoking and tobacco use refers to the use of commercial tobacco products such as cigarettes, not natural tobacco used for cultural purposes.

Are other tobacco products safe?

Tobacco is sold in many forms in Canada. Examples include spit tobacco, cigars, pipe tobacco and bidis. There is no safe tobacco product. Consuming tobacco in any form poses health risks.

Electronic cigarettes (also called vapes or e-cigarettes) are not technically considered tobacco products. Most contain nicotine and pose health risks from this and other chemicals that you inhale when you vape. While some people have had success using e-cigarettes to help them reduce or quit smoking, using both products does not reduce your risk for smoking-caused illness. Vaping is not harmless. Instead, you may consider the

safe and proven quit-smoking methods like combining NRT with quit coaching.

For more information on tobacco products, see [HealthLinkBC File #30b Risks of alternative tobacco and nicotine products](#).

Will vaping help me quit smoking?

While vapour products are less risky than cigarettes,

they are not harmless. It is healthiest for your lungs not to smoke or vaporize anything. Some people have had success using vaping products to quit smoking, but it is important to switch completely from smoking to vaping to reduce your health risks. You will also need a plan to quit vaping eventually. QuitNow's resources are available to help you quit vaping.

