



Quitting Smoking

Why quit smoking?

There are many reasons to quit smoking.

- You may worry about the harmful effects of smoking on your health. In fact, tobacco kills almost 6,000 people each year in B.C. and causes illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, throat and oral cancer, and emphysema.
- You may be concerned about the harmful effects of second-hand smoke to people around you, especially children.
- You may feel that your tobacco use is costing more and more, both in terms of money and ability to lead an active life.

It is always a good time to quit

The health benefits of quitting smoking start the first day, with increased oxygen in the blood and lower blood pressure. Within 1 year of quitting, the risk of coronary heart disease decreases by half. Ten years after quitting, the risk of lung cancer is similar to someone who has never smoked.

Methods to help you quit

Different methods of quitting smoking work for different people. Here are a few choices:

QuitNow Services provides free help to quit smoking, any time of the day or night. Call 8-1-1 and ask for QuitNow or visit www.quitnow.ca. The website has lots of great tips and information and services including:

- an online quit community with professional and peer support;
- email or text message services; and
- a telephone quitline – just call 8-1-1 – translation services are available in over 130 languages on request.

Medications to help with withdrawal can double your chances of quitting. While it is normal to have withdrawal symptoms, medications can reduce the intensity of those symptoms:

- Nicotine replacement therapy products are non-prescription medications which contain nicotine. They work to reduce withdrawal symptoms when you quit smoking by giving you the nicotine you would get through smoking.
- Bupropion (Zyban®) and varenicline (Champix®) do not contain nicotine but work on the brain to manage withdrawal symptoms and cravings and can reduce the urge to smoke. You will need to see your doctor to get a prescription for one of these drugs. Your doctor can help you decide which drug is best for you.

The B.C. Smoking Cessation Program (<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/stop-smoking/index.html>) offers British Columbians nicotine replacement therapy products (nicotine gum and patches) at no cost and smoking cessation prescription drugs as benefits under PharmaCare. This program is open to B.C. residents who smoke or use other tobacco products and wish to quit.

Prescription for Health - B.C. family physicians can help British Columbians who are at-risk (smoker, unhealthy eating, physically inactive, obese) get on the road to a healthier lifestyle - <http://www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/healthy-lifestyles-prescription-for-health.php>.

Health authorities may also have resources to help smokers quit – for information on your health authority, go to <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/tobacco/contacts.html>. Your pharmacist, dentist, counsellor or another health professional may also have advice for you on the best option or combination of options for you.

How to get ready to quit

Planning in advance how you want to quit can help you succeed. Here are some steps to take when preparing to quit smoking:

1. **Stay 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**

In advance, pick the day when you want to quit. Try to pick a day that is no more than 3 weeks away so you don't lose your motivation. Look for a time when you have support and no unusual stresses. Remember, there is no perfect time so pick your day to quit now.

3. **Quit method**

Choose the methods you want to use to quit smoking.

4. **Support**

For most people, talking to friends or others for support can be helpful. Make a list of people and phone numbers.

5. **Triggers**

Think about which situations make you want to smoke and plan how you will cope with each one.

6. **Withdrawal**

Learn what to expect and how you can make it better. For example, irritability is a common withdrawal symptom, and deep breathing helps many people cope with this symptom.



For more HealthLink BC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles/index.stm or your local public health unit.

Click on www.HealthLinkBC.ca or call **8-1-1** for non-emergency health information and services in B.C.

For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance, call 7-1-1 in B.C.

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