



Quitting Smoking

Why should I quit smoking?

There are many reasons to quit smoking. Common reasons include:

- Worrying about the harmful effects of smoking on your health.
 - Tobacco kills almost 6,000 people each year in B.C.
 - Smoking causes illnesses such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, throat and oral cancer, and emphysema.
- Concern about the harmful effects of second-hand smoke on people around you, especially children.
- The cost of tobacco, both in terms of money and your ability to lead an active life.

Other reasons for quitting include:

- Being more confident and in control of your own life.
- Being a positive role model for friends and family.
- Having whiter teeth and fresher breath.
- Having healthier glowing skin and fewer wrinkles.
- Having an improved sense of taste and smell.
- Having improved breathing and general fitness level.
- Healing faster and have fewer complications after surgery.
- Your hair, breath, and clothes won't smell of smoke.

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 is similar to someone who has never smoked.

How can I quit smoking?

There are several methods that can help you quit smoking. These include:

- Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT)
- Smoking cessation drugs (stop smoking medicine)
- Counselling and support
- Cold turkey (abruptly giving up a habit or addiction)

Different methods of quitting smoking work for different people. You may find that a combination of quitting methods work for you.

How can medications help me stop smoking?

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 your symptoms.

Nicotine replacement therapy products, such as nicotine chewing gum and the nicotine patch, 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, but none of the other toxins that are in tobacco smoke.

Bupropion (Zyban®) and varenicline (Champix®) are 2 smoking cessation drugs commonly prescribed in B.C. They 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 health care provider to get a prescription for one of these drugs. Your health care provider can help you decide which drug is best for you.

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

QuitNow

QuitNow provides excellent options for people who are looking to quit smoking (and for the friends and families of those who smoke). The website has lots of great tips, information and services including:

- A Quit Plan tool
- Text support – text QUITNOW to 654321
- Phone support - call toll-free 1-877-455-2233

- Online chat

For more information visit www.quitnow.ca

BC Smoking Cessation Program

The B.C. Smoking Cessation Program offers British Columbians nicotine replacement therapy products 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. 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

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. For more information visit www.healthyfamiliesbc.ca/home/prescription-health.

Your Health Authority or Health Care Provider

Health authorities may also have resources to help smokers quit. For information on your health authority, visit www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/partners/health-authorities/regional-health-authorities. 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.

How can I 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 do not 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 methods

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 support people and their 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.

Are other tobacco products safe?

Tobacco is sold in many forms in Canada. Many are as harmful as cigarettes. Examples include spit tobacco, cigars, pipe tobacco, bidis, herbal cigarettes, etc. Many people use these products because they think these are safer than cigarettes. Most products have many of the same toxic chemicals as cigarettes. These can be just as addictive and harmful to a person's health.

For more information on tobacco products, see [HealthLinkBC File #30b Health Risks of Alternative Tobacco Products](#).

Will e-cigarettes help me quit smoking?

Electronic smoking products (also known as e-cigarettes, electronic cigarettes or vapour) which claim to help people quit smoking or contain nicotine are not approved by Health Canada for sale or use in Canada. The safety, efficiency, and quality of these products has not been fully evaluated by Health Canada and these products may pose health risks. For more information about e-cigarettes, visit [QuitNow \[www.quitnow.ca/tools-and-resources/e-cigarettes.php\]\(http://www.quitnow.ca/tools-and-resources/e-cigarettes.php\)](http://www.quitnow.ca/tools-and-resources/e-cigarettes.php).

For more HealthLinkBC File topics, visit www.HealthLinkBC.ca/healthfiles 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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