

Health tip: Living tobacco free

Did you know tobacco use is the single largest cause of preventable death and disease in the United States? Cigarette smoking may cause many health problems including cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Specifically, more than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking, in which it is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths per year in the United States alone.¹ No tobacco product is safe. This includes cigarettes, cigars, pipes, hookah, e-cigarettes, and smokeless tobacco products such as chewing tobacco. While the nicotine in tobacco products is highly addictive, the benefits of quitting outweigh tobacco use altogether. In fact, health benefits occur only 20 minutes after quitting and continue to improve over a matter of weeks.²

There are approximately 600 ingredients in cigarettes. When burned, cigarettes create more than 7,000 chemicals. At least 69 of these chemicals are known to cause cancer, and many are toxic.³ There is a long list of serious health risks associated with smoking, and knowing these may help motivate you to quit.

Using tobacco products may put you at a greater risk of⁴:



Developing certain cancers, including throat, mouth, esophagus, stomach, pancreas, kidney, and lung cancers



Having gum disease and tooth loss



Developing lung problems such as chronic obstructive lung disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and asthma



Developing reproductive health issues in both men and women



Developing a stroke or coronary artery disease which can lead to angina and heart attacks



Developing type 2 diabetes



The benefits of quitting tobacco begin almost immediately³

20 minutes – Heart rate and blood pressure drop

24 hours – The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal

2 weeks to 3 months – Your lung function begins to improve

1 to 12 months – Coughing, sinus congestion and shortness of breath decrease

1 year – The risk for heart attack drops dramatically

5 to 10 years – The risk of mouth, throat and esophageal cancer is half that of a smoker's

15 years – The risk of developing coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker's

Get ready to quit⁵:

- **Talk to your primary care provider about medication or other resources to help you quit.**
- **Pick a quit date and a method**—successful quitting is a matter of planning and commitment.
- **Choose your method for quitting—there are three ways to quit smoking:**
 - “Cold turkey” – Stop smoking, using smokeless tobacco or vaping at once on your Quit Day.
 - Cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke, chew or times you vape each day until you stop completely.
 - Smoke only part of each cigarette, reducing the amount until you stop smoking completely.
- **Find support**—tell family members and friends of your plan to quit smoking or access one of the many organizations that can help you quit smoking. (Visit [lung.org/quit-smoking](https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking) for support and resources.)
- **Recognize your progress**—no matter how many days it’s been since you quit, each day is a victory. Make sure to reward yourself.
- **Find alternative to smoking**—Try toothpicks, cinnamon sticks, sugarless gum, sugar-free lollipops or celery as an alternative. Go to a movie, work out or go to the gym, visit non-smoking friends, take a walk, enjoy a cup of tea or coffee, or try a new hobby that involves using your hands.

Remember if you slip up, don’t give up. Use past attempts as a learning experience and review what worked well and what didn’t. Recommit yourself, re-evaluate your quit plan/method and reconnect with your support systems.



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/index.htm#beginning. May 2023. Accessed August 2023.

² American Lung Association, Benefits of Quitting. <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/i-want-to-quit/benefits-of-quitting>. May 2023. Accessed October 2023.

³ American Lung Association, What’s in a Cigarette? <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/whats-in-a-cigarette>. May 2023. Accessed October 2023.

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/#cardio. October 2021. Accessed October 2023.

⁵ American Lung Association, How to Quit Smoking. <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/i-want-to-quit/how-to-quit-smoking>. May 2023. Accessed October 2023.

This information is for general informational purposes only and is not intended nor should be construed as medical advice. Individuals should consult an appropriate medical professional to determine what may be right for them.