



Fighting Heart Disease and Stroke

# How Can I Quit Smoking?

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## Why should I quit smoking?

Smoking cigarettes tops the list of major risk factors of our number one killer -- heart and blood vessel disease. In fact, almost one-fifth of deaths from heart disease are from smoking. The long list of diseases and deaths due to smoking is frightening. Smoking also harms thousands of nonsmokers who are exposed to cigarette smoke. It causes infections, disease and death in infants and children.

If you smoke, you have good reason to worry about its effect on your health and the health of your loved ones and others. You could become one of the more than 417,000 deaths smoking causes every year.

When you quit, you reduce that risk tremendously.



As soon as you quit smoking, you have less chance of having a heart attack. If you've already had a heart attack and stop smoking now, you will lower your risk of having another!

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## Is it too late to quit?

No matter how much or how long you've smoked, when you quit, your risk of heart disease goes down. Three years after quitting, your risk of heart disease is almost the same as if you'd never smoked. That's like gaining back the health you almost lost!

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## How do I quit?

### Step One

- List reasons to quit and read them daily.
- Wrap your cigarette pack with paper and rubber bands and when you smoke, write down the time of day, how you feel, and how important that cigarette is to you (on a scale of 1 to 5)
- Rewrap the pack.

### Step Two

- Keep reading your list of reasons and add to it if you can.
- Don't carry matches and keep your cigarettes a bit out of reach.
- Each day, try to smoke fewer cigarettes, trying not to smoke the ones that aren't most important.

### Step Three

- Continue with Step Two.
- Don't buy a new pack until you finish the one you're smoking.
- Change brands twice during the week, each time for a brand lower in tar and nicotine.
- Try to stop for 48 hours at one time.

### Step Four

- Quit smoking completely.
  - Increase your physical activity.
  - Avoid situations you relate with smoking.
  - Find a healthy substitute for smoking.
  - Do deep breathing exercises when you get the urge.
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## What if I smoke after quitting?

It's hard to stay a nonsmoker once you've had a cigarette, so try everything you can do to avoid that "one." The urge to smoke will pass. The first 2 to 5 minutes will be the toughest. If you do smoke after quitting:

- This doesn't mean you're a smoker again -- do something now to get back on track.
  - Don't punish yourself -- you're still a nonsmoker.
  - Think about why you smoked and decide what to do the next time it comes up.
  - Sign a contract to stay a nonsmoker.
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## What happens after I quit?

- Sense of smell and taste come back.
  - Smoker's cough goes away.
  - Will digest more normally.
  - Feel alive and full of energy.
  - Breathe much easier.
  - Easier to climb stairs.
  - Feel free from the mess, smell and burns in clothing.
  - Feel free of "needing" cigarettes.
  - Live longer and have less chance of heart disease, lung disease and cancer.
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## How can I learn more?

- Talk to your doctor, nurse or health care professional. Or call your local American Heart Association at 1-800-242-8721.
  - If you have heart disease, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
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## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your doctor.  
For example:

When will the urges stop?

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How can I keep from gaining weight?

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