



How Can I Handle the Stress of Not Smoking?

No one says that quitting smoking is easy. But everyone says it's worth it! Quitting will drastically reduce your risk of developing heart and blood vessel. It will also lower your chance of having lung disease and cancer. Most of all, quitting can save your life and the lives of others around you.

No matter how much or how long you've smoked, when you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop. In time your risk will be about the same as if you'd never smoked!



How can I cope with the urge to smoke?

- Write down the reasons why you quit and look at the list often.
- Don't talk yourself into smoking again. When you feel an urge to have "just one," stop yourself. Think of what triggered the urge, and find a different way to handle it. For example, if you feel nervous and think you need a cigarette, take a walk to calm down instead.
- Be prepared for times when you'll get the urge. If you smoke when drinking, cut down on alcohol so you don't weaken your promise to yourself.
- Change your habits. Instead of having a cigarette after dinner, brush your teeth or walk the dog.
- Go where smoking isn't allowed. In restaurants ask to be seated in the nonsmoking section.
- Stay around people who don't smoke. Ask for support and find a buddy you can call when you feel weak. Tell others they can help you by not giving you a cigarette and by being supportive.

- Reward yourself each time you get through a day or week without smoking. Treat yourself to a movie. Or figure out how much money you've saved and buy yourself something special.
- Talk to your healthcare provider. Counseling, support groups, and sometimes medications might help you stop smoking and succeed in becoming a non-smoker.

How can I relax?

- Try deep breathing. Take a long, deep breath, count to 10 and release it. Repeat five times and you'll feel much more relaxed.
- Allow 20 minutes a day to let go of tension this way: Close your eyes, relax your muscles and think hard about one word, like "calm." Say it until you reach a state of relaxation.
- Think positive thoughts! Focus on how great it is that you've stopped smoking, how food tastes better and how nice it is not to wake up coughing. Remind yourself how smoking stinks, stains your teeth and gives you bad breath.
- Listen to relaxation audiotapes.

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How can physical activity help?

- Walking and other physical activity releases stress and calms you.
- It can improve your mood and help you think clearer.
- It keeps your mind off cigarettes.
- It can help control your appetite.
- It can help you lose weight if you're overweight, or stay at a normal weight.
- It can lower your blood pressure level.
- It can increase your "good" blood lipid level.
- It can help reduce your risk of developing heart disease and stroke.
- It can help control blood sugar by improving how your body uses insulin.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
- 2** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease.
- 3** For information on stroke, call **1-888-4-STROKE** (1-888-478-7653) or visit us at **StrokeAssociation.org**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

How long will the cravings last?

What about nicotine gum or a nicotine patch?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.

Knowledge is power, so Learn and Live!