

HEALTH

## How to Quit Smoking

Knowing what makes you light up can help you find the quit strategies best suited for you. ID your smoking personality, then try our tailored advice. Before long, you'll see your habit go up in smoke!



### If you consider yourself a social smoker

You may not buy your own pack, but that doesn't save you from the pitfalls of puffing. Bumming only one smoke from a friend constricts arteries by 25 percent for at least 30 minutes, raising your risk for heart disease, research from McGill University reveals.

**Your quit plan** Use your cell phone to call off the urge to join friends when they step out for a cig. Smokers who follow quit-intervention programs that use text messages are twice as likely to avoid cigarettes six weeks after quitting as those who don't, a review in *The Cochrane Library* shows. "Automated texts can provide encouragement and tips for staying strong when you need them most—while at a bar or party," says study author Robyn Whittaker, M.D., program leader of health technology research at the University of Auckland. Follow [@quitnet](#) on Twitter for mobile support and look for its text-message service in the coming months. Still tempted? Ask a nonsmoking pal to distract you when the rest of your posse disappears.

### If you consider yourself a stress smoker

It may feel as if smoking helps you relax, but it's an illusion. "As nicotine levels decline between cigarettes, you experience a gradual unease, which disappears as soon as you take a drag," says Peter Hajek, Ph.D., professor at the Wolfson Institute of Preventive Medicine. "The relief is instant, so you credit smoking for helping stress rather than creating it."

**Your quit plan** Practicing healthier coping skills can help you build the stamina to rebuff cigarettes as a crutch when you hit a rough patch. Stewing over a fight with a friend? Go for a walk around the block; even five minutes of outdoor exercise can improve mood, a study from the University of Essex notes. Stuck in traffic? "Take slow, deep breaths—it can counteract a racing heart and high blood pressure caused by stress," says Alan Peters, a certified tobacco-treatment specialist. And when you do quit, try to avoid hair-pulling situations the first week by, say, waking up earlier to avoid rush hour, advises Nathan Cobb, M.D., assistant professor at Georgetown University Medical Center.

### If you consider yourself a weight watcher

There's no denying smoking curbs appetite, but you don't want to die trying to be slimmer. Quitters do gain (about 8 pounds), but they have a good chance of

shedding those pounds once they're over the hump: In a study on dieting, former smokers lost more weight than current ones, the journal *Eating Behaviors* reports. Quitting may bolster your willpower—a vital factor in eschewing unhealthy eats.

**Your quit plan** "You might be tempted to reach for fatty and carb-rich treats when you're quitting because they trigger the same reward response in the brain that cigarettes used to," says Bonnie Spring, Ph.D., professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University. "Commit to a healthy eating plan from day one, and keep snacks on hand that are low in calories and high in filling fiber and protein, such as apple slices and lowfat yogurt, so you can reach for those when the urge to snack strikes—and not find yourself pulling a candy bar out of the vending machine." And if you're not already physically active, start working sweat sessions into your routine. (They'll get easier as your lung function improves, we promise!) Women who exercise and eat healthfully while stopping smoking gain less weight, and they also have a better chance of nixing their nicotine habit for good, a review of 10 studies in the journal *Addiction* finds.

### If you consider yourself a serial quitter

"Don't feel discouraged by your previous track record: Even short smoke-free stints help your health," says Bill Blatt, director of tobacco programs at the American Lung Association. Carbon monoxide levels in your blood drop to normal 12 hours after you quit, your lungs function better in 30 days, and your heart disease risk is cut in half after a year.

**Your quit plan** Your instinct may be to keep this attempt under wraps, but broadcasting your goal (informing family, updating your Facebook page) will hold you accountable and fire up your resolve when facing a relapse, says Patrick Draper, a tobacco-treatment specialist at the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center. You may also want to try nicotine-replacement therapy, such as the patch or gum. "Serial quitters have to address the mental, social and biological aspects of addiction—let NRT help take care of the physical cravings so you can focus on behavior changes," Blatt says. Replace midday butt breaks, for example, with a 10-minute walk.

