



How to stop smoking

Why it's never too late to stop

If you can stop smoking, you'll live longer and feel better. It doesn't matter how old you are or how long you have smoked for.

Stopping can be difficult. But it's the most important thing you can do to look after your health. You'll also protect the people around you from breathing in your smoke.

If you have a lung condition, quitting is an effective way to treat it and slow its progress. You'll feel better too - you'll feel less short of breath and cough less.

There's lots of help available to quit. You **can** do it.

Are e-cigarettes bad for me?

The consensus is that using an e-cigarette or vaping is far less risky than smoking. It's a less harmful way to receive nicotine and the vapour contains few of the harmful chemicals found in cigarette smoke. If they are present, they are at much lower levels. There is now also good evidence that e-cigarettes can help smokers quit.

Why is smoking bad for me?

Tobacco smoke contains over 5,000 chemicals including nicotine. Nicotine is highly addictive. Smokers smoke for the nicotine but are harmed by the tar and other chemicals.

Many of them can cause cancer. Others are poisonous, such as hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide and ammonia. When you smoke, these chemicals can damage your lungs but also pass into your blood and spread through your body. Smoking can affect every part of the body - from your skin to your brain. Outside the lungs smoking causes heart attacks, strokes and cancer. On average, smokers live 10 years less than non-smokers. Smoking tobacco is the biggest avoidable cause of death.

There's no safe way to smoke tobacco:

- Cigarette brands marketed as low tar, light or menthol are not safer than other cigarettes. Smokers get similar amounts of tar and other chemicals.
- Roll-ups are just as dangerous as manufactured cigarettes and can be more dangerous without filters.
- Smoking cigars or pipes is also bad for your health.
- Shisha smoking, also called hookah or waterpipe, also contains tobacco. The smoke goes through water, but contains the same dangerous chemicals and is just as harmful as normal cigarette smoke.

Smokeless or chewed tobacco

Smokeless or chewed tobacco is used by south Asian communities. These tobacco products are known by their south Asian names, such as betel quid, paan or gutkha, and are just as addictive.

They can also be harmful, and are associated with mouth cancer, cardiovascular disease and problems in pregnancy. As well as tobacco, they can also include other unhealthy ingredients such as betel nuts or areca nuts, which are known to cause cancer in their own right.

Examples of these products are:

- tobacco with or without flavourings, such as mishri India powdered tobacco and qimam, also known as kimam
- tobacco with slaked lime or lime paste and areca nut, such as paan, gutkha, zarda, mawa, manipuri and betel quid with tobacco
- tobacco with other ingredients added, such as kahini, gul, and naswar, also called niswar or nass

Inhaling any smoke is harmful.

This especially includes smoking other substances such as cannabis. Cannabis smoking is associated with developing emphysema. You can become addicted to cannabis, and just like tobacco, cannabis smoke contains cancer-causing chemicals. If you mix cannabis with tobacco and smoke it, you're at risk of becoming addicted to nicotine too.

Why is it so hard to stop?

Most smokers want to stop because they know about the risks to their health. But many keep smoking because they're addicted to nicotine, often from a young age. As well as marketing targeted at young people, the tobacco industry has designed and modified cigarettes to make them addictive. The nicotine in tobacco gets rapidly into your brain and creates a need to continue to smoke. The falling level of nicotine in your brain creates the urge to smoke. Controlling these urges is the key to being able to kick the habit.

Smoking is often part of your daily routine and habit. Your local stop smoking clinic can support you to manage this side of smoking as well as tackling physical cravings.

If you smoke 20 cigarettes a day, giving up could save you more than £275 every month - that's over £3,000 a year!



Why should I stop?

You'll live longer, feel better and have more money to spend on things and activities you like doing, like holidays. You'll also protect people around you who used to breathe in your smoke.

- If you already have a lung condition, stopping smoking is the **best step you can take for your health** and quality of life. It will help you cope with your symptoms and stop your condition getting worse. For example, smokers are five times more likely to catch flu.
- It's never too late to stop, no matter how long you have smoked for. Your lungs will work better, even if you stop when you're over 60. If you stop smoking when you're 30, **you're likely to live 10 years longer.**
- Your **friends and family will be healthier** too. People who breathe in second-hand smoke are at risk of the same diseases as smokers. Second-hand smoke is particularly dangerous to babies and children as their lungs are still developing and are much more vulnerable to breathing in toxic materials.
- Stopping is a key way to **protect your children's health** in the long term. Children are much more likely to take up smoking if their parents smoke.

How can I stop?

Get support. It can be hard to change a long-term habit, whether it's what you eat, how much you exercise or smoking. You don't have to do it on your own. With support from friends, family and professionals, you're more likely to be successful.

Some people manage to give up smoking by going cold turkey - stopping smoking without cutting down or using nicotine replacement therapy. But you're around 3 times more likely to quit successfully if you use a combination of stop smoking medication and specialist help. Lots of organisations give excellent support to help you. There's some useful contacts on page 6. Talk to your GP or pharmacist too.

When you're ready to stop smoking – have a plan

- Pick a date to stop and decide you'll be a non-smoker from that day. Tell your family and friends and plan something fun to take your mind off it.
- Ask your friends and family for support. If someone close to you is thinking of stopping, why not stop at the same time so you can support each other?
- Think of situations in which you're likely to be tempted and come up with ways to overcome the urge. For example: 'If I'm with friends who are smoking, I'll leave the room.'
- Get rid of everything in your home or at work that reminds you of smoking.
- Call yourself a non-smoker and think of yourself as one.
- Think about the possible withdrawal symptoms and how you will cope.

If you find yourself thinking about having a cigarette, try these distractions:

- Talk to someone – call a friend or relative to get some support.
- Go for a brisk walk – this will help clear your head and lungs.
- Stay busy – download the Smokefree app or play a game on your phone.
- Drink a glass of water or juice – keep yourself occupied for those crucial few minutes.
- Change the scene – try moving to another room or go outside for some fresh air.

How quickly will I feel better?

Your health will improve in just a few hours:

after 20 minutes	Your pulse returns to normal
after 8 hours	Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in your blood fall by half Your oxygen levels begin to return to normal
after 24 hours	Carbon monoxide is eliminated from your body Your lungs start to clear out debris
after 48 hours	There is no nicotine in your body Your sense of smell and taste improve
after 72 hours	Breathing becomes easier Your energy levels rise
from 2 to 12 weeks	Your blood circulation around your body improves
from 3 to 9 months	Your lung function increases by up to 10% making breathing easier
after 1 year	Your risk of having a heart attack is half of someone who still smokes
after 10 years	Your risk of lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker
after 15 years	Your risk of a heart attack is the same as someone who's never smoked

What about the withdrawal symptoms?

The instant you stop smoking, your body will start to recover. You may experience some nicotine withdrawal and recovery symptoms in the first few weeks. You may still have the urge to smoke or feel a bit restless, irritable, frustrated or tired. Some people find it difficult to sleep or concentrate.

Remember the symptoms will pass and there are lots of things you can do to manage them in the meantime.

If you're struggling to cope, remind yourself why you're giving up. Remember the health and financial benefits for you and your family. And there are lots of people to help you.

Stop smoking treatments

Nicotine replacement therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) comes in different forms and helps you to overcome urges to smoke. It's available on prescription from your GP or local stop smoking service, or to buy from a pharmacy. All the therapies release nicotine into your bloodstream in a safe way.

Therapies include patches, gum, sprays, lozenges and inhalators. Patches release nicotine slowly. Other therapies act more quickly. The stop smoking service, your GP or pharmacist can help you select the best product for you. E-cigarettes are also a form of nicotine replacement treatment. They are more effective than the other products but you need to buy them yourself and they may still carry some risk over long-term use. Other NRT products are risk-free.

For most people the best approach is to combine two sorts of NRT. Usually this means a patch to provide a background level of NRT and a faster-acting product, such as gum, inhalator or nasal spray to use when you get cravings. Therapy usually lasts 8-12 weeks before you gradually reduce the dose and stop.

Other stop smoking medications

There are two other medications available on the NHS: varenicline (Champix) and bupropion (Zyban). Both can double your chances of stopping. Recent research suggests varenicline is the most effective, and more effective than NRT. Ask your GP about this.

What about using e-cigarettes (vaping)?

Using e-cigarettes (vaping) is 20 times less harmful to your health than smoking. You can find a type of e-cigarette and e-liquid that fits with your needs on your own, but your local stop smoking service can also advise you and provide additional support and medications.

When you switch completely from smoking to vaping you're likely to get significant health benefits. There are now over 1.5 million people in the UK who successfully stopped smoking with the help of e-cigarettes.

If you can, it is best to stop vaping as well, especially if you have a lung condition. It's not yet clear if any of the many types of e-cigarettes cause any harm if you vape for a long time. But, **it is much better for your health to continue to vape than to go back to smoking!**

What if I start smoking again?

If you lapse, don't worry. You haven't failed. It's a small setback and it's always worth continuing.

What if I have a cigarette?

- If you do have a cigarette, stop again immediately.
- Throw away the rest of the pack.
- Go for a walk, drink some water and take a deep breath.
- Ask yourself if you really want to be a smoker again.

- Think about what made you slip up.
- Be positive and put it behind you.
- Remember why you wanted to give up.
- If the method you're using isn't working for you, try something else.
- Remind yourself you are a non-smoker.

When the time is right, spend a bit longer planning. Think what really worked for you and what made you lapse. Talk to your doctor or local stop smoking service to get more help to cope with cravings this time.

Remember: the next time could be the last time you ever have to try.

You can do it!

Further information and support

Your personal quit plan

Get a free plan from www.nhs.uk/oneyou/for-your-body/quit-smoking

National stop-smoking helplines and websites

Calls to these helplines are free from a landline, but not from a mobile phone.

England - Smokefree 0300 123 1044

Lines are open daily, 9am to 8pm weekdays and 11am to 4pm at the weekend.

www.smokefree.nhs.uk

Scotland - Quit your way 0800 84 84 84

Lines are open 8am - 10pm weekdays, 9am-5pm at the weekend.

www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/quit-your-way-scotland

Wales - Help me quit 0808 278 4105

Lines are open Monday to Thursday, 8am to 8pm, Friday 8am to 5pm and Saturday 9am to 4pm.

www.helpmequit.wales

Northern Ireland - Want to Stop

For advice or to find your local stop-smoking service visit www.want2stop.info or text 'Quit' to **70004**.

Go smokefree with your mobile phone

Download the free **Smokefree app**. It's a four-week programme of practical support, encouragement and tailored advice. www.smokefreeapp.com

Am I ready to quit?

If you're thinking about quitting, it's important that you feel ready to make the change.

Fill in this page to see if you're ready:

I smoke because...

I want to quit because...

I spend £ a week on cigarettes

This is £ a year

If I give up I could use this money on...

How I will feel when I stop...

Am I ready to quit? **yes / no**

Keep this where you can see it, such as on your fridge.

Our helpline on **03000 030 555** is there to help you.

Get in touch with us to find support near you.

Helpline: 03000 030 555

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Ringing our helpline never costs more than a local call and is usually free, even from a mobile.

helpline@blf.org.uk

blf.org.uk

British Lung Foundation
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We value feedback on our information. To let us know your views, and for the most up to date version of this information and references, call the helpline or visit **blf.org.uk**