

SMOKING CESSATION – CONTINUING THE PROGRESS

If you've stopped smoking for 2 weeks or more, congratulations! You have made it through the most difficult part. By now you should be enjoying some of the physical benefits from quitting, such as a better sense of smell, more energy, less coughing and more lung power.

Here are some tips to help continue the positive progress you've started:

- Review your “reasons for quitting” and “no quit” plan regularly, to make certain that you're not falling into old patterns.
- Continue to reward yourself for staying off of tobacco.
- Keep yourself out of high risk situations, in which you'll feel tempted to use tobacco again.
- Keep using supportive coworkers, friends and family.
- Consider keeping a journal of your progress and review it often.

RELAPSE PREVENTION:

Relapse is often a two-part process: the individual often starts to feel unhappy without tobacco, and then they experience a nicotine craving on top of that feeling, causing them to pick up tobacco again. Thoughts like “Maybe I can have just one cigarette,” or “I wonder what it would taste like now,” or feeling jealous of those people who are still using tobacco often leave a person vulnerable to using tobacco again. Part of “staying quit” is listening for those thoughts, catching them and correcting them with healthier thoughts, such as:

- “No, one cigarette will lead to more, and I'll be up to two packs a day.”
- “It will taste just as bad as it always did.”
- “I only enjoyed a few of the cigarettes. Most of them didn't do anything for me.”
- “The people who are still use tobacco aren't healthy or happy about it.

HANDLING SURPRISE ATTACKS

Even after successfully quitting cigarettes for year, and even decades, it is common to experience occasional “surprise attacks.” These urges to smoke/use tobacco can be triggered by a traumatic event, by being around an old smoking situation, or even by a fleeting thought. The most effective approach is to utilize the same skills that helped you to quit in the first place:

not acting on it, and waiting the craving out. It is important to remember that even one cigarette will start the addictive process all over again.

IF YOU DO USE TOBACCO AGAIN:

DON'T:

- Beat yourself up over it. Nicotine is a very difficult chemical to quit, and there is no shame in having some difficulty with it.
- Tell yourself, “What’s the use? I might as well keep smoking/using tobacco.”
- Give up. Sometimes a relapse is part of the quitting process. The important thing is to continue trying.

DO:

- Take the relapse seriously. Take immediate action to make sure that it only happens once.
- Feel proud about the time you went without smoking. It wasn’t “wasted time,” because you can learn from it. Start again, using what worked for you, and finding new ways to cope with the things that caused your relapse.
- View this as part of the entire process of quitting, and continue with your quit program.
- Review again your reasons for quitting.
- Find the “relapse trigger” that caused you to use tobacco again. What can you do next time to handle that trigger in a healthier way?
- Stop immediately if it was 1 or 2 cigarettes. If it led to continuous days of use, then set a new quit date and start again.
- Try another medical aid to quitting. With a variety of choices including Nicotine Replacement Therapy, Zyban and Chantix, there is an opportunity to find the product that works best for you.