

Strategies to quit Smoking

It's great that you're thinking about quitting smoking. No matter how long you've smoked, no matter how heavily, your health will benefit from quitting. **It is never too soon or too late in life to stop smoking.**



Most smokers say they want to quit, and it can take many attempts to finally be successful. Research and experience have shown that **your best chance of stopping permanently** is to get help, such as coaching or counseling, learn how to live your life without cigarettes, and use medications that can ease the process of withdrawing from nicotine. According to the National Institutes of Health, **“Quitters can double or triple their chances of success** by using medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges, along with coaching support.”

Use Medications to Ease Off Nicotine

When people try to quit smoking, they may feel depressed, anxious or irritable, and crave a cigarette. That happens because nicotine is a highly addictive drug and their bodies have to adjust to living without it. However, medications are readily available that ease the physical discomfort of nicotine withdrawal and the urge to smoke.

- One approach is to use a product that supplies nicotine in a different form than cigarettes. Examples are skin patches, gum and lozenges, which are available without a prescription, as well as an inhaler and nasal spray, which require a prescription. These products deliver small amounts of nicotine to help the smoker wean off nicotine slowly. They don't contain the other products in tobacco smoke that cause most of the harms from smoking.

The Mass General Tobacco Research and Treatment Center has found that a combination approach is safe and more effective than any one of these products alone. **The Center's advice is to use the patch continually and then when you have an urge to smoke, add another product that is absorbed quickly—gum, lozenges or an inhaler.**

- Another strategy is to use one of the two pills also approved to treat smoking: bupropion (Zyban or Wellbutrin) and varenicline (Chantix).
 - Varenicline (Chantix) is more effective than bupropion.
 - Bupropion, a drug also used to treat depression, increases the odds of quitting, separate from its antidepressive effect.
 - You and your doctor should discuss which of the prescription medications might be best for you.

Support is Key

Many free programs are available that can help keep you motivated to quit and provide help and encouragement as you deal with withdrawal symptoms, cravings and tempting situations. Some examples are in the box below.

FREE ways to get help with quitting tobacco

- If you have **questions**, want **free information**, or **free in-person, one-one-one coaching** - call MGH Community Health Associate's [Living TOBACCO-FREE](#) at 781-485-6210.
- If you want **free over-the-phone coaching and free nicotine patches** - call the Massachusetts Smoker's Helpline at **1-800-Quit-Now** or **1-800- Déjalo (Spanish)**. Other languages: 1-800-784-8669. Deaf/TTY: 1-888-229-2182. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information, visit [Make Smoking History](#).
- If you want **free online help with quitting** - visit [Smokefree.gov](#) (also offers **texting** programs) and [BecomeAnEX.org](#).
- If you are a **Partners HealthCare employee**, contact **Partners in Helping You Quit** at 617-724-2205 or PiHQ@partners.org. You may be eligible for free medication or over-the-phone counseling to help you cut down or quit.

Keep Trying

Don't be discouraged if you haven't been able to quit smoking in the past. Get help and keep trying. You will eventually succeed with the right combination of supports.

Adapted from information provided by the MGH Tobacco Research and Treatment Center at <https://giving.massgeneral.org/strategies-quit-smoking/>, accessed October, 2017.



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