STRATEGIES to get ready to quit smoking

a self-assessment guide

KAISER PERMANENTE®
Nearly everyone old enough to read knows the health hazards of smoking. Why, then, don’t the 75 percent of smokers who say they want to quit give it up?
Fear of Failing

“I tried quitting smoking before . . . and started smoking again.” We understand that quitting is difficult. We are here to support you through this very tough challenge. Many smokers try to quit smoking multiple times before they finally succeed. Each attempt gives you new information about what works and what does not work for you. Use what you learned in your past experiences in your current effort. The only way to fail is to stop trying.

Fear of Withdrawal

Nicotine is an addicting drug found in cigarettes. When you do quit smoking, you may experience some withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms vary in kind and length from person to person, but are usually most intense the first week or two. They gradually diminish over a few weeks. Once you are committed to taking the necessary steps to quit smoking, you can manage uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms. It helps to think of this time as a transition period during which your body and emotions are returning to normal.

Fear of Inability to Cope Without Cigarettes

“I’ll feel too stressed out.” You can learn other ways to relax, such as walking, deep breathing, or taking a stress management course.

“I’ll gain weight.” Only one-third of smokers who quit gain weight. Exercising regularly and avoiding high-calorie foods (those with a lot of sugar and fat) will help you minimize weight gain.

Understanding your fears and learning new skills to overcome them is part of the strategy to get ready to quit smoking.
This guide will help you evaluate your readiness to quit smoking. Being sure you’re ready to quit and having taken steps to prepare yourself for becoming a nonsmoker will give you the best chance at success. Preparation for quitting is the key to success.

Why the Focus on Readiness?

To quit smoking, you must do more than acknowledge that cigarettes are harmful. You must believe that smoking is an important problem. You must believe you will benefit from quitting. And, finally, you must believe you’re capable of quitting. More than 36 million Americans have quit smoking. You can, too.

Your confidence in your ability to quit is a more powerful and lasting force than outside pressure. Beginning with small steps and developing new skills can increase your confidence and make it easier to quit when the time is right.

Successful quitting takes . . .

✓ Learning about the smoking behavior
✓ Learning new skills such as relaxation and exercise
✓ Making a commitment
✓ Developing confidence
✓ Choosing the right time
✓ Replacing unhealthy habits and activities with healthy ones

_We have to do the best we can. This is our sacred human responsibility._

–Albert Einstein
Let’s look more closely at the key ingredients for successfully quitting smoking.

Developing Confidence
How confident are you that you’re ready to quit smoking now? On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 10 is “absolutely positive I am ready” and 0 is “I am not ready”), where are you? If you answered 6 or less, perhaps now isn’t the best time after all.
Look back on previous attempts to quit smoking. You can learn from those experiences as you get ready to quit now. How long were you able to quit? What helped you succeed? What tripped you up? What can you do differently this time?

Making a Commitment to a Major Change
Becoming a nonsmoker is a process that can mean making dramatic personal changes.
For example, a nonsmoker must learn how to deal with stressful situations without cigarettes. A nonsmoker may decide to spend time in places where smoking is not allowed. You may have to change what you do with friends. Are you ready to make becoming a nonsmoker a priority in your life?
Focus on the Positive

While quitting smoking means giving up something, it also means gaining a lot. Ask yourself what you like about smoking. What do you dislike about smoking? What do you have to look forward to after you quit? Gaining confidence? Control? Having more energy, money, improved health? Focusing on positive gains will increase your readiness.

Notes: ________________________________________________________________
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Timing

People can often sense when the time is right to make a major change. If you are faced with a lot of problems and worries, now may not be the best time to quit. Review the following areas in your life. What major changes are going on right now?

• Job
• Relationships
• Major losses
• Home
• Problems with other addictions—alcohol, drugs. Get help with them too by scheduling an evaluation with your local Kaiser Permanente Chemical Dependency Recovery Program. The appointment center or Member Services Department (1-800-464-4000) can help you find the nearest location.

How ready are you to quit smoking?
STRATEGIES to get ready

What does the process of quitting smoking look like? In *The Smoker’s Book of Health*, Dr. Tom Ferguson describes the Ten Stages of Quitting.*

Smokers tend to think of quitting as a huge, insurmountable obstacle. It’s more realistic—and more useful—to think of it as a gradual, step-by-step process that may last for months or even years. Here is what to expect along the way.

**Stage One**
You have identified yourself as a health-concerned smoker. You are worried about the effects of smoking on your health and wonder if you should quit or cut down.

**Stage Two**
You decide that you will seek more information about smoking and quitting and begin to actively explore your alternatives.

**Stage Three**
You decide to take some steps to modify your smoking level and/or overall health status—switching brands, cutting down, getting more exercise, taking vitamins, managing stressful situations more effectively, paying more attention to your bonds with friends and family, etc.

**Stage Four**
You make a firm commitment to quit but do not specify a quitting date.

**Stage Five**
You set a quitting date and make a firm commitment to quit on that date.

*Tom Ferguson, MD, *The Smoker’s Book of Health* (NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1987).*
Stage Six
You smoke your last cigarette and go without smoking for 24 hours.

Stage Seven
You complete your first week as a nonsmoker.

Stage Eight
You complete your first month as a nonsmoker.

Stage Nine
You complete your first three months as a nonsmoker.

Stage Ten
You complete your first year as a nonsmoker.

Which stage are you today? __________________________

You may already have come a good part of the way toward your goal. Reading this guide suggests that you have already reached at least stage two of the quitting process.

It is important for those who wish to quit smoking to realize that during stages one through five, they may find themselves feeling very confused about what to do. Studies show that during this period, a smoker’s positive feelings about smoking do not disappear, although negative feelings increase considerably. It is only after smokers actually quit that this internal conflict begins to ease. New nonsmokers gradually lose their positive feelings about cigarettes, and the conflict lessens.
After reviewing the key ingredients for successfully quitting smoking—your confidence, commitment, gains and losses, and timing—you may have decided that you’re not yet ready to quit. In the Ten Stages of Quitting, you’re probably somewhere in Stages 1, 2, or 3. Here are suggested activities for each stage—healthy steps you can take to smoke less.*

**Stage One**

*You have identified yourself as a health-concerned smoker.*

- Pay attention to the role smoking plays in your life.
- Seek out opportunities to talk about smoking with others.
- Observe the ways nonsmokers respond to situations to which you respond by smoking.
- Observe other smokers carefully, paying special attention to the negative aspects of the habit.
- Smoke in front of a mirror, watching yourself closely from the first puff to the last. What exactly is it that goes on when you smoke a cigarette?

**Stage Two**

*You have decided that you will seek information about healthier alternatives.*

- Read through one of the books in the Resources section on page 13, marking sections that seem especially useful to you. Make notes in the blank pages at the back or in a separate notebook.
- Seek out friends who have recently quit smoking. Ask them to describe how they did it.

*Tom Ferguson, MD, The Smoker’s Book of Health (NY: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1987).*
• Begin a regular fitness program. Decide to eat less fat, more fruits and vegetables, and avoid food additives.
• Try practicing one stress-reducing activity on a daily basis: schedule quiet time, learn deep relaxation techniques, take a stress management class, listen to a relaxation tape.
• Tell one close friend that you are exploring healthier alternatives to smoking.
• When you feel an urge for a cigarette, wait one minute before lighting up. Experience the urge fully and think of other ways you might respond to it.
• Begin to reward yourself for becoming more aware of your smoking patterns and for learning about more healthful alternatives.

Stage Three
You have decided to take some steps to modify your smoking risk (switching brands, cutting down, getting more exercise, taking vitamins).

• Begin by keeping a smoking journal in which you write down your thoughts about smoking.
• Become aware of times when you find yourself smoking more or less than usual.
• Begin collecting and trying new stress reduction techniques.
• Adopt a healthful new activity that is incompatible with smoking (swimming, going to concerts, joining a singing group).
• Switch to a lower tar brand. Be careful not to smoke more heavily to make up for the reduced nicotine intake.
• Reward yourself for each smoking reduction or risk modification.
You may have evaluated your readiness to quit smoking and decided you are ready. Stages 4 through 6 may describe you. Suggestions for Stages 1 through 3 are still appropriate for you. A good next step to move into Stage 4—making a firm commitment to quit—would be to practice seeing yourself as a nonsmoker.*

**Several times each day:**
Think of yourself as a nonsmoker. Use the good reasons below to develop a clear image of yourself as a nonsmoker. Close your eyes. Imagine how you will look, feel, smell, and taste as a nonsmoker.
- You’ll have fewer colds.
- Your shortness of breath and cough will decrease.
- You’ll have more spending money.
- You’ll have more energy and stamina.
- You and your house, hair, clothes, breath, and car will smell better.
- You’ll look better and healthier.
- You’ll have a new sense of control over your life.

*Adapted with permission from *Pathways to Health*, D. Kemper, J. Giuffre, G. Drabinski, Boise, Idaho; Healthwise, Inc., 1985.*
Read the Resources section of this guide for more help.

Quit on your own. Pick up information on quitting smoking at your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Department.

Call the Kaiser Permanente Healthy Living Helpline at 1-866-402-4320. Our lifestyle coaches can help you quit smoking. (Available to Kaiser Permanente members only.)

Take the Kaiser Permanente tobacco-cessation class, Living Well: Freedom from Tobacco/Treatment for Nicotine Addiction. Learn a variety of techniques to help you quit smoking and get tobacco-cessation medications at the cost of your copayment. Call the Healthy Living Helpline for more information.

Visit the Kaiser Permanente Web site at kp.org/quitsmoking for more information on quitting, classes, and online programs.

Get a free online program to help you quit with HealthMedia® Breathe™. Visit kp.org/healthylifestyles for a personalized plan to reach your goals and tools to track and monitor your progress.

And remember, “We don’t throw old habits out the window—we walk them down the stairs very slowly.”

—Mark Twain
Kaiser Permanente Programs

Kaiser Permanente Healthy Living Helpline: 1-866-402-4320, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (English and Spanish). (Available to Kaiser Permanente members only.)

Contact your local Health Education Department or visit kp.org/classes for information on smoking-cessation classes and a current class catalog. Programs are also available for:

- Weight management
- Stress management
- Exercise

Community Resources

Contact local chapters of the American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, or American Heart Association for written materials, self-help smoking-cessation guides, and ongoing classes. Or, call your community college.

Nicotine Anonymous: 1-800-642-0666
California Smoker’s Helpline: 1-800-766-2888

Books

The No-Nag, No-Guilt, Do-It-Your-Own-Way Guide to Quitting Smoking, by T. Ferguson, MD, 1988, Ballantine Books
Quit and Stay Quit, by T. Rustin, MD, 1991, Hazelden
Keep Quit, by T. Rustin, MD, 1996, Hazelden

Web Sites

kp.org/quitsmoking
quitnet.org
nicotine-anonymous.org
BecomeAnEx.org
The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please consult your health care professional.