

Tobacco

Imagine the life you could enjoy physically, socially, and financially by eliminating smoking from your life.

Smoking can
**LOWER YOUR LIFE
EXPECTANCY**
by over a decade.

Whether you smoke cigars, cigarettes, pipe tobacco, or chew snuff, tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and death. Over 16 million Americans are living with a smoking-induced disease.

THE DAMAGE OF SMOKING

Cancer, emphysema, bronchitis, heart disease, and diabetes are all linked to tobacco use. Smoking affects our eyes, skin, teeth, and even causes hair loss. Pregnant, smoking mothers increase the chances of miscarriage, premature birth, stillborn infants, or a low birthweight baby.

TOBACCO AND THE BRAIN

Nicotine is the addictive drug that enters the bloodstream by chewing, inhaling, or smoking tobacco. It causes your body to release adrenaline, a hormone increasing

your blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate. Just like with illegal substances, nicotine activates the brain's reward and pleasure systems. Over time, your body becomes dependent, continually craving and using the drug despite negative consequences. Beyond physical addiction, smokers associate the behavior with their social lives, making the habit much harder to break. Withdrawal effects may include: difficulty concentrating, trouble sleeping, overeating, and tobacco cravings.

QUITTING

The benefits of quitting far outweigh the costs of a nicotine addiction. The risk of cancer, heart disease, and stroke is reduced; one smoke-free year lowers your heart attack potential by half. Quitting increases your life expectancy, as much as five years for a 35-year-old male. After 15 smoke-free years, it's possible to be as healthy as someone who has never lit up once.

Once you've made the decision to quit, it's important to stay positive. Understand that if your first attempt is unsuccessful, don't give up. Quitting without assistance is possible, but most tobacco users need help to kick the habit. Behavioral-focused counseling and medication are great tools. Nicotine Replacement Therapy, or NRT, is a common treatment. This includes: transdermal patches, gum, nasal sprays, and inhalers, which all release a controlled dose of nicotine. Smokers are able to decrease their nicotine

dependence and alleviate withdrawal symptoms simultaneously.

ACTION STEPS

- ✓ **Make a choice** – A decision to quit is always the first step. Set a date for stopping. The more detailed your plan, the better your chances.
- ✓ **Seek support** – Talk to family or friends who have successfully kicked the habit. Ask your support network to hold you accountable.
- ✓ **Distract yourself** – Chew gum or suck on hard candy. Keep your hands occupied with a toothpick or a pen. Simple distractions can help re-program your brain.
- ✓ **Talk to a doctor** – Create a plan or explore treatment options with your doctor. He or she can prescribe medication if necessary.
- ✓ **Avoid triggers** – Rearrange your social settings to include smoke-free places, like a museum or theater.

KEEP IN MIND

A smoke-free life is worth the aim. You're not alone in your journey away from tobacco use. Keep your focus on each day and celebrate your first 24-hours without nicotine. You've earned it.

What steps will you take today to be well, healthy, and live life more fully?