



Quitting smoking

without gaining weight!

Smoking is the single most important preventable cause of death. Around 106,000 people in the UK die prematurely every year because they smoked. Half of these premature deaths occur in middle age but thousands also live a long time with painful smoking-related illnesses.

Quitting smoking is not easy, but there are plenty of good reasons to do it. There are also many ways to go about it and lots of help is available.

Why quit smoking?

You know that smoking is bad for you but the desire to smoke is so great that this knowledge can easily be put to one side in favour of another cigarette.

Reminding you how bad it is for your health, why you might find it difficult to stop, and how much there is to gain from stopping may help you to take the step to give up. For good.

Tobacco and health

- Smoking causes a very long list of diseases and health problems including:
- lung cancer
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- heart disease
- strokes
- impotency
- osteoporosis (brittle bones), making them more susceptible to fractures
- cervical cancer in women
- Smoking can also affect your breathing, taste and sense of smell.

Passive smoking

- If you smoke at home and live with a non-smoker you'll increase their risk of heart disease and lung cancer by 25 percent.
- Smoking will have an impact on your children's health and they are more likely to begin smoking if they see you smoking at home.

Pregnancy and quitting

If you are pregnant, there are even more reasons to give up. Smoking when pregnant can cause low birth weight, premature birth, bleeding and even miscarriage.

Smoking during pregnancy also increases your baby's risk of being a victim of cot death and of going on to develop a range of illnesses later in life, from serious respiratory infection to cardiovascular disease.

Why is it difficult to quit?

The nicotine in tobacco smoke causes both physical and psychological dependence. This is a complex form of addiction as you will have a strong desire to smoke, even if you wish to stop.

Smokers often continue smoking because they experience unpleasant withdrawal effects when they stop, including irritability, difficulty concentrating, craving for another cigarette, you may also gain weight as a consequence of giving up (but Q-active is here to prevent that!).

Smoking is also a habit - it becomes associated with various emotional occasions, situations and events. For some people, this psychological dependence can be even harder to break than the physical addiction. But it can be done - in the last 15 years, 11 million people have successfully become ex-smokers in the UK.

If you've already tried to give up but you're still smoking, accept that it was all part of the process for you. Trying again is simply a continuation of your original decision to give up. Most people who give up successfully have been through several attempts to quit.

What do I gain from quitting?

By stopping smoking, you can improve your health and enjoy a longer, healthier life. You will also save money - a 20-a-day smoker spends around £1600 a year on cigarettes.

As smoking also causes wrinkled, damaged skin, giving up is likely to make you look better and younger too.

A two-month nutritional/lifestyle plan to quit without gaining weight

This plan works on the principle of stabilising blood sugar and hormone levels. Withdrawal effects from nicotine are a direct effect of its action on your blood sugar, so follow some basic nutritional principles:

1. Combine carbohydrate and protein foods - salmon and rice with salad, chicken stir fry with noodles, and so on.
2. Eat 3 meals per day plus 2 healthy snacks.
3. Eat foods rich in B vitamins (fish, green vegetables, wholegrains, mushrooms, eggs) and Vitamin C (peppers, watercress, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, strawberries, lemons, kiwi fruit, oranges, tomatoes).
4. Eat foods rich in magnesium (almonds, cashew nuts, green vegetables), calcium (cheese, almonds, seeds, green vegetables, prunes), zinc (lamb, seafood, nuts, fish, egg yolk, wholegrains) and iron (pumpkin seeds, almonds, cashew nuts, raisins, pork).
5. Avoid refined/processed/sugary foods.
6. Avoid other stimulants like coffee and tea if you can - drink more water, fruit and herbal teas.

Stage 1: Breaking The Associated Habits

It's important to understand your smoking first - do you smoke when you are tired, hungry, upset, after a meal, with a drink? Keep a diary for 1 week (don't attempt to change smoking habits at this stage), note every situation when you smoke - how do you feel before and after each cigarette? At the end of the week add up how many cigarettes you have smoked associated with each situation, for example:

After a meal - 6 cigarettes
With alcohol - 5 cigarettes

If you spot smoking triggers write down how you could deal with them if you were to stop smoking - a good way to break a habit is to replace it with a new one.

For another couple of weeks smoke as much as you like - but not with the associated habit - and continue until all you do is smoke without the associated habits. For example, if you normally smoke straight after a meal, wait at least 30 minutes until you have a cigarette.

Stage 2: Reducing Your Nicotine Load - It can help to reduce your nicotine load slowly.

Take supplements of 1,000mg of Vitamin C and 200mcg of chromium/50mg B3 daily (to help reduce cravings). Also to help reduce cravings - eat a diet high in fruit, vegetables and seeds. Whenever you feel a craving for a cigarette, first eat some fruit - this will raise a low blood sugar level, which is often the trigger for the craving.

Regular exercise can also help - exercise can reduce stress and is mood boosting.

Now reduce the number of cigarettes to no more than 5 a day, each with a nicotine content of 2mg or less, or have nicotine gum (two strengths - 4mg and 2mg). You want to be down to a maximum of 10mg of nicotine a day before quitting.

Although gradually cutting down works for some people, if this does not work for you it may be best to commit to a quit date and then give up completely.

Stage 3: Time to Quit

Giving up smoking is easier if you have support, even if it's just encouragement from your friends and family.

Your chances of successfully quitting are better still if you take nicotine replacement products, or prescription-only medicine. For people who commit to a quit date, these can be prescribed by GPs and from New Leaf. Smokers who get professional help, including medicines, are four times more likely to successfully quit than people who try with willpower alone.

Coping with difficult situations

As smoking may have been part of your normal routine for so long, there will be occasions when it is especially difficult to resist cigarettes. Some tips to help you are listed below.

- For a while after you quit, try to avoid places where lots of other people smoke or that you associate with smoking, such as pubs. Smoking is often associated with drinking alcohol.
- If people offer cigarettes, ask them not to. Remind yourself that most smokers also wish they could stop. Say "No thanks, I am not a smoker".
- Avoid situations that you associate with smoking. For example, if you usually smoke after dinner, leave the table and do something else instead.
- If you do have a lapse, don't use it as an excuse to start smoking regularly. Many ex-smokers make the odd mistake, but remain smoke-free.