

Questions and Answers

1. Q: Is Nicotine the harmful substance in cigarettes?

A: Cigarette smoke contains about 4,000 chemical agents, including over 60 carcinogens.

Many of these substances, such as carbon monoxide, tar, arsenic and lead, are poisonous and toxic to the human body.

It is not the nicotine, but the thousands of toxins present in tobacco and its combustion products that are responsible for the vast majority of tobacco-caused disease.

2. Q: Is Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) hazardous for smokers?

A: No, NRT is safe for smokers.

NRT provides nicotine to the smoker without the dangerous toxins that are present in cigarettes and cigarette smoke.

These toxins, not nicotine, are responsible for the vast majority of smoking-caused diseases.

NRT is considered a “clean” nicotine delivery system and is safe for smokers.

3. Q: Does smoking while using NRT cause heart attacks?

A: No, smoking while using NRT does not increase cardiovascular risk.

Smokers are already at high risk for cardiovascular events.

The nicotine effects of increasing heart rate and heart contractility do not increase with higher nicotine intake, which may occur when nicotine is obtained from two sources at once, such as smoking while using NRT.

It is more dangerous for patients with heart disease to continue to smoke than to use NRT.

4. Q: Can I use NRT if I am pregnant?

A: NRT is safer than smoking for the pregnant woman and her fetus if she is unable to quit smoking with behavior modification.

5. Q: Are stop-smoking medications effective?

A: Stop smoking medications are effective with or without counseling. NRT and bupropion (Zyban) have each been found to about double quit rates compared to a placebo, and varenicline (Champix) triples quit rates.

6. Q: Is it safe to use various NRT's at the same time and/or in combination with bupropion (Zyban)?

A: The nicotine patch and gum/lozenge/inhaler may be used at the same time and/or in combination with bupropion (Zyban), [but not with varenicline (Champix)].

Combining nicotine gum with patch therapy has been found to provide superior quit rates than the gum or patch alone, without an increase in adverse effects.

7. Q: Are stop-smoking medications only to be used for the short-term?

A: NRT should be used for as needed to maintain or prolong staying off tobacco. Some people may need this support for years.

Varenicline's (Champix) effectiveness is enhanced over a second course of treatment.

Smokers should be encouraged to use NRT for as long as needed to maintain or prolong tobacco abstinence.

8. Q: Is nicotine gum, inhaler, lozenge or the patch only to be used by those who are ready to quit smoking – or could they be used by those who just want to reduce their tobacco use?

A: NRT can be used by people who are not yet ready or able to quit as, for some individuals, being tobacco-free is not a foreseeable goal.

NRT may help these smokers take a "cigarette holiday", or, in some cases, substantially reduce their smoking as an interim, achievable step toward being smoke-free.

9. Q. What is the best way to quit smoking?

A. The way that works! No two people are alike. That's why you must find the method for quitting smoking that works for YOU. If every method or product worked for everybody, you probably would have quit by now.

The process of quitting smoking goes something like this: You try to quit, you start smoking again, you slowly learn what works and what doesn't, you try to quit again, you re-evaluate, then you eventually go on to successfully quit smoking forever.

Some people quit through sheer determination and can quit cold-turkey. Others need classes, drugs, therapy, various products, etc. Whatever works for you and is safe, you should consider and use. Let your doctor know you want to quit and ask for his/her assistance. This step alone can help improve your chances of quitting considerably.

10. Q: What is the first thing I need to do once I've decided to quit?

A: You should **set a quit date** - the day when you will break free of your tobacco addiction. Then, consider visiting your doctor or other health care provider before the quit date. He/she can help by providing practical advice and information on the medication that is best for you.

11. Q: How will I feel when I quit smoking? Will I gain weight?

A: Many smokers gain weight when they quit, but it is usually less than 10 pounds. Eat a healthy diet, stay active, and try not to let weight gain distract you from your main goal - quitting smoking. Some of the medications to help you quit may help delay weight gain.

12. Q: How can I change my daily routine, which includes smoking a cigarette with my breakfast?

A: When you first try to quit, change your routine. Eat breakfast in a different place and drink tea instead of coffee. Take a different route to work.

13. Q. How can I help someone I know quit smoking?

A: It's understandable to be concerned about someone you know who currently smokes. It's important to find out if this person wants to quit smoking. Most smokers say they want to quit. If they don't want to quit, try to find out why. Here are some things you can do to help:

- Express views in terms of your own concern about the smoker's health ("I'm worried about...").
- Acknowledge that the smoker may get something out of smoking and may find it difficult to quit.
- Be encouraging and express your faith that the smoker can quit for good.
- Suggest a specific action, such as calling a smoking quit-line for help in quitting smoking.
- Ask the smoker for ways you can provide support.

Here are two things you should not do:

- Don't send quit smoking materials to smokers unless they ask for them.
- Don't criticize, nag or remind the smoker about past failures

14. Q. Why are you quitting?

A: Have you ever asked yourself why you are quitting smoking? Are you quitting for your health? Your doctor? Your family? Your pocketbook? You don't really know for sure why you are quitting?

I hope you DO know why you are quitting. Every smoker should have a reason for quitting. You may have some vague thoughts in your mind that you are quitting because "it's bad for me" or because "my wife wants me to."

Yes, you know smoking is bad for you, but that never stopped you from smoking before, did it? You knew you could save money, smell better, feel better, etc., if you quit smoking, but you didn't quit. Why not? Perhaps you didn't truly give yourself enough clearly defined reasons for quitting.

Here's a quick exercise that that you could complete: Grab a piece of paper and pencil, and along the left side of the page, write down a reason why you want to quit smoking. Skip down a few lines and write down another reason, and so on, until you've got five reasons. Why are you quitting? Health, wealth, smelth? (Yeah, I just made that up but it rhymes).

Now, below each reason, write down the BENEFITS of this reason. Write as many as you can think of. Be very descriptive.

For example:

Reason: Smell better

Benefits: People will enjoy being around me more often. I can get more dates. I won't offend my clients. I can get a better job.

Reason: Feel better

Benefits: Feeling better is its own benefit. If I feel better I can do more and better work. I can stop taking so much medicine. I can save money by not having to go to my doctor all the time. I'll have more energy. Getting up in the morning will be so much easier.

You see? Do this for all five of **YOUR** reasons. Come up with as many benefits as you can.

The last step is to take these benefits and turn them into "reality cards." A reality card is an index card on which you write statements of "fact." Take the benefits you've written down and turn them into statements of fact. Write these statements of fact on index cards.

For example:

The benefit "I can get a better job" becomes "I have a better job because I quit smoking." The benefit "I'll have more energy" becomes "Ever since I quit smoking I have incredible amounts of energy!"

Write the statements of fact as exciting, motivating messages to yourself. Even though you haven't yet quit smoking, call these "statements of fact" because they are stated as if you already achieved the goal and attained the benefit of the goal. Put one statement of fact on each index card. Read your "reality cards" at least three times per day. Also, you should read them whenever you get a craving to smoke. Use a rubber band to attach the cards to your pack of cigarettes. That way you'll see and read them whenever you want to smoke.

Make sure you know why you are quitting and you'll find it much easier to resist your next craving.

15. Q: How to prepare myself emotionally to quit?

A: .One of the biggest challenges to quitting smoking is preparing yourself emotionally. Many smokers talk about feeling a sense of loss when thinking about quitting smoking. You may find yourself thinking about quitting smoking as losing a friend or at the very least losing your coping strategy. Either way you describe it, you may sense the loss of security and control when you quit smoking. To overcome these feelings you need to prepare yourself emotionally for the process of quitting and for life after cigarettes.

1. Repeat to yourself your reasons for *needing* to quit smoking.

Your reasons for needing to quit smoking will provide you with the strength and willpower to get through the quitting process. Review these reasons. Reinforce them to yourself several times a day. Write them down and carry them with you. Place them in a visible area for yourself.

2. Plan activities for your first smoke-free week. The worst thing that can happen on your quit date or the weeks that follow is to find yourself in a situation where you are craving a cigarette and you have no alternative strategy available to you other than reaching for a cigarette. Plan activities that are inconsistent with smoking such as doing crossword puzzles, jogging, swimming, washing dishes, going to the grocery store, visiting the library or church, etc. Idle or empty time can be dangerous during the initial quitting process. Stay active and busy.

3. Occupy your hands with other objects. Use pencils, toothpicks, paper clips, rubber bands, etc. to occupy your hands when you feel something is missing without a cigarette.

4. Beware of cigarette advertisements. As a smoker, you have probably been bombarded with literature on cigarettes, offered many coupons and rebates on cigarettes and tempted by magazine and billboard ads. Don't be tempted. It may be helpful for you to analyze and seriously consider what these ads are really saying to you.

For example, ask yourself how companies have been able to sell you a product that causes serious medical diseases that can lead to death. Why is it that the individuals who are portrayed in these ads always have smooth skin and white teeth? Nicotine alters the elasticity in the skin and yellows your teeth. Is your health really only worth that 50 cent coupon? Why do cigarette ads always show healthy, young, attractive individuals who are very happy? Most smokers tend to suffer from some effects of their smoking habit such as coughing and more frequent episodes of colds, bronchitis and pneumonia. Many smokers continue to smoke as a way of dealing with depression and stress. What is so cool and refreshing about tar sticking to your lungs and 4,000-plus substances

being deposited in your lungs (including arsenic, formaldehyde, and carbon monoxide)? After years of smoking many smokers are not able to participate in the vigorous activities that are shown in the cigarette ads, nor are they able to breathe in and smell the fresh mountain air that is shown. Cigarette advertisements are successful in luring individuals into smoking and continuing to smoke by appealing to your perceived vulnerabilities. Everyone wants to be seen as attractive, successful, sexy and fun. The reality is that by being pulled in by these ads you are risking your life to help the tobacco company make money. If you remind yourself of these realities you will be less likely to be tempted and intrigued by these ads. Rather, you should be angry that they are making money at your expense.

5. Never allow yourself to think that one cigarette won't hurt. Many smokers relapse because they fall into the trap of believing that they can control their smoking and one cigarette won't hurt. This is harmful thinking because the majority of smokers may be able to have one for a while but eventually this will lead to two and before you realize it you will be back smoking the same quantity of cigarettes. Further, in order for your body to begin healing itself and to complete the withdrawal process, you need to have all nicotine out of your system. By smoking one cigarette you re-introduce nicotine back into your system which delays healing.

6. "Smoking is no longer an option for me." Immediately after quitting you may find yourself looking for excuses to justify smoking. Excuses are easy to find when you are looking for them. However, if you have told yourself that smoking is not an option for you anymore, you will need to find another option when you feel stressed or nervous or when you are finishing a meal or waiting for a friend. On your quit date remind yourself that smoking is no longer an option for you and therefore you must handle whatever situation presents itself to you. This statement will empower you to find and use alternative coping strategies.

REFERENCES:

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