



# HOW TO STOP SMOKING

# Contents

|                                 |    |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Why is smoking bad for me?      | 4  |
| Different types of tobacco      | 8  |
| How can I quit?                 | 10 |
| Vaping and e-cigarettes         | 15 |
| How can I benefit?              | 18 |
| When will I feel better?        | 19 |
| What about withdrawal symptoms? | 20 |

If you smoke, stopping is the single best thing you can do for your health. And if you smoke and have a lung condition, **the most effective treatment for your lungs is to stop smoking**. You'll feel less short of breath and cough less.

If you stop smoking, you're likely to live longer and feel better. It doesn't matter how old you are or how long you have smoked for. You'll also protect the people around you from breathing in your smoke. There's lots of help available to stop. You **can** do it!

# Why is smoking bad for me?

Tobacco smoke contains over 5,000 chemicals, including nicotine. Nicotine, when smoked, is highly addictive. People who smoke are addicted to the nicotine, but are harmed by the tar and other chemicals in tobacco.

Many of the chemicals can cause cancer. Others are poisonous, such as hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide and ammonia. When you smoke, these chemicals can not only damage your lungs, but also pass into your blood and spread through your body. Smoking can affect every part of the body – from your skin to your brain.

## Smoking and your lungs

Smoking (or breathing in other people's smoke, known as second-hand smoke) is a leading cause of many lung conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), obstructive sleep apnoea (OSA) and lung cancer. According to latest data from the NHS, 35% of all deaths for respiratory conditions can be attributed to smoking. If you smoke and have a lung condition, **the most effective treatment is to stop smoking.**

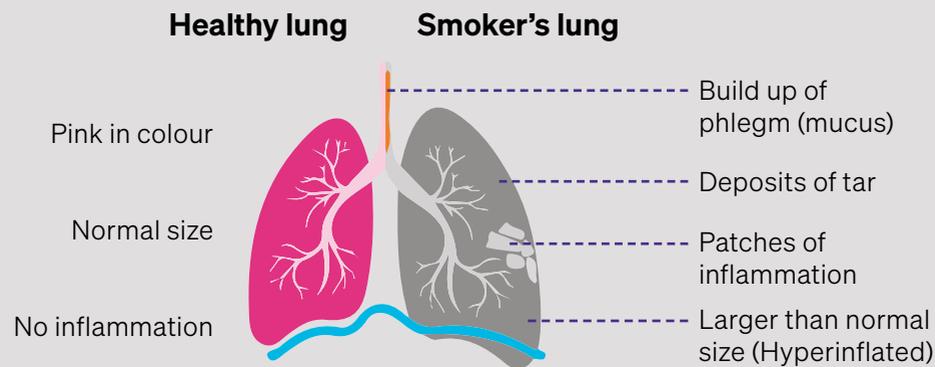


Image showing the difference between a healthy lung and a smoker's lung.

Smokers are at higher risk of developing respiratory infections, including flu, pneumonia and COVID-19. And smokers are also at increased risk of more severe symptoms from viral infections if they do get infected.

In addition to the damage caused to the lungs, smoking causes heart attacks, strokes and many forms of cancer. On average, smokers live 10 years less than non-smokers. Smoking tobacco is the biggest avoidable cause of death. That's not all, smoking causes skin to age prematurely, and increases the risk of impotence and infertility.

## Why can it be so hard to stop?

Most smokers want to stop because they know about the risks to their health. But many keep smoking because they're addicted to nicotine, often from a young age. The tobacco industry has designed and modified cigarettes to make them as addictive as possible, as well as marketing targeted at young people.

The nicotine in tobacco gets rapidly into your brain and creates a need to continue to smoke. The falling level of nicotine in your brain creates the urge to smoke. Controlling these urges is the key to being able to kick the habit.

Smoking is often part of your daily routine and habit. Your local stop smoking service can support you to manage this side of smoking as well as tackling physical cravings.

## Why should I stop smoking?

You're likely to live longer, feel better and have more money to spend on things and activities you like doing. You'll also protect people around you from having to breathe in your smoke. Passive smoking is harmful too, especially for children and young people.

- If you already have a lung condition, stopping smoking is the **best step you can take for your health** and quality of life. It will help you cope with your symptoms and stop your condition getting worse.
- Your friends and family will be healthier too. **People who breathe in second-hand smoke are at risk of the same diseases as smokers.** Second-hand smoke is particularly dangerous to babies and children as their lungs are still developing and are much more vulnerable to breathing in toxic materials.
- **Smoking puts your lungs at risk** – smokers are five times more likely to catch flu and twice as likely to get pneumonia.
- It's never too late to stop, no matter how long you have smoked for. Your lungs will work better, even if you stop when you're over 60. If you stop smoking when you're 30, **you're likely to live 10 years longer.**
- Stopping is a key way to **protect your children's health** in the long term. Children are four times more likely to take up smoking if their parents smoke.
- As well as being bad for your health, **smoking is also bad for the environment.** Smoking and the tobacco industry drive deforestation, corruption, child labour, and other human rights abuses.
- You'll **save money.**



**“I managed to stop smoking ten years ago and have a new lease of life. I now enjoy swimming and cycling. I wouldn't have been able to push myself as hard if I were still smoking – and coughing.”**

Michael

If you smoke 20 cigarettes a day, quitting could save you more than £300 every month – that's over £4,000 a year!

Save  
**£4,000**  
a year!

# Different types of tobacco

There's no safe way to smoke tobacco. Tobacco comes in different forms – all of which are harmful and addictive:

- Cigarette brands marketed as low tar, light or menthol are not safer than other cigarettes (many of these types of cigarettes are now banned in the UK, but are still available abroad). Smokers get similar amounts of tar and other chemicals from these cigarettes.
- Roll-up cigarettes are just as dangerous as manufactured cigarettes. Filters do not make smoking any safer and are a source of plastic pollution.
- Smoking cigars or pipes are also bad for your health.
- Cannabis smoking is harmful for your health.
- Shisha smoking often contains tobacco, but it's the burnt charcoal that increases the harm. The smoke goes through water but still contains the same dangerous chemicals and is just as harmful as normal cigarette smoke.

## Cannabis smoking

Inhaling any type of smoke is harmful. This especially includes smoking other substances such as cannabis (also known as marijuana, weed, pot, dope or grass). Cannabis smoking is associated with developing emphysema and can make symptoms worse in people with asthma.

You can become addicted to cannabis, and just like tobacco, cannabis smoke contains cancer-causing chemicals. If you mix cannabis with tobacco and smoke it, you're at risk of becoming addicted to nicotine too.

Regular use of cannabis can also be bad for your mental health, such as increased risk of developing a psychotic illness such as schizophrenia.

## Shisha

Shisha, also called hookah, narghile, waterpipe, or hubble bubble, is a form of smoking tobacco. It's addictive and harmful for your health. Smoking shisha can at least double your risk of developing lung cancer and could also increase your risk of other cancer types, such as mouth or stomach cancers.

## Smokeless tobacco

Smokeless tobacco is tobacco that isn't burned. It's often chewed, sucked, or breathed in. There are different types of smokeless tobacco. The products are often known by their south Asian names, such as betel quid, paan or gutkha.

Smokeless tobacco is addictive and harmful for your health, and is not a safe alternative to smoking. It's associated with mouth cancer, cardiovascular disease and problems in pregnancy. As well as tobacco, it can also include other harmful ingredients such as slaked lime, betel nut or areca nut, which are known to cause cancer in their own right.

Examples of smokeless tobacco are:

- tobacco with or without flavourings, such as mishri India powdered tobacco and qimam, also known as kimam
- tobacco with slaked lime or lime paste and areca nut, such as paan, gutkha, zarda, mawa, manipuri and betel quid with tobacco
- tobacco with other ingredients added, such as kahini, gul, and naswar, also called niswar or nass.

# How can I quit?

It can be very hard to change a long-term habit, whether it's what you eat, how much you exercise or smoking. You don't have to do it on your own. With support from friends, family and professionals, you're more likely to be successful.

## Smoking cessation (stop smoking services)

**You're around three times more likely to stop successfully if you use a combination of stop smoking treatment and specialist help.**

You can start your stop smoking attempt with your GP. They will be able to give you a prescription to reduce nicotine cravings, as well as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) such as patches and gum. Your GP should also be able to advise on using e-cigarettes, which can be an effective quitting tool, despite not being risk free themselves.

Your GP will also be able to refer you to local specialist stop smoking services. But **you can also contact your local stop smoking service yourself**, for support in your stop smoking journey. Using aids prescribed by your GP alongside the behavioural support offered by stop smoking services is the most effective way to quit.

If you smoke and have a long-term lung condition, like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) or pulmonary fibrosis, your doctor should offer you support in stopping smoking every time you meet them.

Find information on specialist stop smoking services near you on the NHS website at [www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/find-your-local-stop-smoking-service](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/find-your-local-stop-smoking-service). Depending on where you live in the UK, sessions may happen remotely, by phone or video

call, or in person at GP surgeries or pharmacies. You may be offered support through an app, text messages or another digital platform in addition to help you stop smoking. There are plenty of apps available to help you stop smoking – search online for one that suits you.

## Go smokefree with your mobile phone

Download the free Smokefree app. It's a four-week programme of practical support, encouragement and tailored advice. Go to [www.smokefreeapp.com](http://www.smokefreeapp.com)

## Stop smoking treatments

### Nicotine replacement therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) comes in different forms and helps you to overcome urges to smoke. It's available on prescription from your GP or local stop smoking service, or to buy from a pharmacy. All the therapies give you a low level of nicotine, without the tar, carbon monoxide and other poisonous chemicals that are in tobacco smoke.

Therapies include patches, gum, sprays, lozenges, and inhalators (a device to inhale something). Patches release nicotine slowly, whereas other therapies act more quickly. For most people the best approach is to combine two sorts of NRT. Usually this means a patch to provide a background level of NRT and a faster-acting product, such as gum, inhalator or nasal spray to use when you get cravings. People usually take NRT for 8-12 weeks before gradually reducing the dose and stopping. Ask your GP, pharmacist or stop smoking service for help to select the best combination for you.

E-cigarettes are also a form of nicotine replacement treatment, as the vapour usually includes nicotine. Evidence suggests that they

are at least as effective at helping people quit smoking as other NRT products, but people have individual preferences.

## Other stop smoking medications

Medication is available on the NHS to help you quit smoking: bupropion (Zyban) and varenicline (Champix). Champix is currently unavailable in the UK. Both can double your chances of stopping. Talk to your GP about stop smoking medication.

## How will I benefit from stopping smoking?

Fill in the form on page 18 to remind yourself why you want to quit and how you're going to do it. You can print it out so you can keep it somewhere you can see it.

## I'm ready to stop smoking – what should I do?

When you're ready to stop smoking – have a plan.

### Your personal quit plan

Get a free personal quit plan from the NHS website. Go to [www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/personal-quit-plan](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/personal-quit-plan)

### Our top tips:

- **Go to see your GP** and ask for a prescription for medication to help you to quit smoking, as well as a referral to your stop smoking service. They'll be able to discuss with you the range of things you can try to help you quit, and which might be the best method for you. With this help you're three times more likely to quit successfully.
- **Pick a date to stop and decide you'll be a non-smoker from that day.** Tell your family and friends and plan something to do to take your mind off it.
- **Ask your friends and family for support.** If someone close to you is thinking of stopping, why not stop at the same time so you can support each other?
- **Think of situations where you're likely to be tempted** and come up with ways to overcome the urge. For example: 'If I'm with friends who are smoking, I'll leave the room or use my vape.'
- **If you find yourself struggling, go back to the stop smoking services for help.** There are also stop smoking apps available that some find helpful for additional support.
- **Keep your hands and mouth busy** – when you're out, try putting your drink in the hand that usually holds a cigarette and drink from a straw.
- **A craving can last five minutes** – so think of five-minute strategies. If you find a certain time of day or place hard, try a new routine.
- **Make a list of your reasons for quitting** – read it when you need motivation.
- **Call yourself a non-smoker** and think of yourself as one.
- **Think about the possible withdrawal symptoms** and how you will cope.
- **Reward yourself when you're doing well**, but don't beat yourself up if you're struggling. If the method you're using isn't working for you, try something else. Don't quit quitting!

**“We were going away after Christmas. I decided that would be a good time to stop, as I would be away from the places that I usually smoked. Going out of the back door to smoke became just a natural habit.**

**Just before we went away, I had my last cigarette – and I’ve never looked back.”**

Judith

# Vaping and e-cigarettes

## What is vaping (using an e-cigarette)?

E-cigarettes are a device that allows you to inhale nicotine in a vapour, rather than smoke. They don't burn tobacco and produce smoke. They don't produce tar particles or carbon monoxide, which are two of the most harmful chemicals in tobacco smoke. Using an e-cigarette is also known as vaping.

In recent years, e-cigarettes have become a popular tool to help people quit smoking. At the moment, e-cigarettes are not licensed as medicines though this may happen in the future. However, stop smoking services will support people who are using them as a way to quit smoking. There are different types of e-cigarettes available to buy.

## Using e-cigarettes to stop smoking

An expert independent evidence review by Public Health England found that e-cigarettes are around 95% less harmful to health than tobacco and are effective as a tool to help smokers quit smoking. Vaping is a less harmful way to take in nicotine and the vapour contains few of the chemicals found in cigarette smoke - if they are present, they are at much lower levels. There is now also good evidence that e-cigarettes can help smokers quit and guidance to stop smoking services is that they should support people who want to quit this way.

Millions of people in the UK have successfully stopped smoking with the help of e-cigarettes. Your GP or stop smoking advisor should be able to advise you on how to use an e-cigarette to stop smoking, and how you can use them with other support to improve your chances of stopping smoking.

## E-cigarettes and your lungs

E-cigarettes are a relatively new stop smoking tool. They are thought to be around 95% less harmful to health than tobacco and for many they are a helpful way to give up smoking. But e-cigarettes are not risk free, and more research is needed on how long-term vaping can affect the lungs and overall health. For example, we know that vaping can have some impact on inflammation in the airways which might cause harm over long periods. We don't recommend anyone using e-cigarettes unless they are trying to stop smoking.

So, while it's clear vaping is less harmful for health than smoking, it's best to stop vaping eventually – especially if you have a long-term lung condition. But it's important to not give up vaping before you're ready, as this could cause you to start smoking again. Many of the same techniques used to quit tobacco smoking can be used to quit vaping. Remember: it's best to eventually stop vaping as well as smoking, but if you're struggling, vaping is a better long-term alternative to smoking.

There is no good evidence second-hand vapour from e-cigarettes is harmful – this is different to second-hand smoke from tobacco smoking, which has known health risks. However it can be a nuisance to others. People who vape should be considerate and avoid blowing large clouds around others. People with a lung condition may be sensitive to the large clouds of vapour produced from e-cigarettes – similar to if your lung condition is made worse by environmental triggers, like cold weather, dust or pollen. It's important to be aware of your own triggers so you can understand how to reduce your risk of having a flare-up.

## E-cigarettes and home oxygen therapy

If you have low blood oxygen levels, you may benefit from home oxygen therapy. At your oxygen assessment, you'll be asked about your smoking habits and offered advice and treatment to quit if you smoke. This is because smoking while using oxygen therapy can be very dangerous (even fatal).

E-cigarettes should not be used when using home oxygen therapy. If you are a long-term vaper, you may not be prescribed home oxygen therapy as it is a fire risk to yourself and others.

# How can I benefit?

If you're thinking about quitting smoking, it's a good idea to think about how you'll benefit from giving up. This will give you motivation to quit. It may help to fill in the form below. Then keep it where you'll see it, such as on your fridge.

I'm quitting because...

If I stop smoking, I'll be able to...

To stop smoking I will...

If I quit I could use the money I'll save on...

How I will feel when I stop...

Need help or support? Our helpline on **0300 222 5800** is there for you.

# When will I feel better?

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| After 20 minutes       | Your pulse returns to normal.  |
| After 8 hours          | Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in your blood fall by half.<br>Your oxygen levels begin to return to normal. |
| After 24 hours         | Carbon monoxide is eliminated from your body. Your lungs start to clear out debris.                              |
| After 48 hours         | Your sense of smell and taste improve.   |
| After 72 hours         | Breathing becomes easier.<br>Your energy levels rise.  |
| Between 2 and 12 weeks | Your blood circulation around your body improves.  |
| From 3 to 9 months     | Your lung function increases by up to 10% making breathing easier.   |
| After 1 year           | Your risk of having a heart attack is half of someone who still smokes.  |
| After 10 years         | Your risk of lung cancer falls to half that of a smoker.   |
| After 15 years         | Your risk of a heart attack is the same as someone who's never smoked.   |

Information from Better Health: Quit Smoking

# What about withdrawal symptoms?

The instant you stop smoking, your body will start to recover. You may experience some nicotine withdrawal and recovery symptoms in the first few weeks. You may still have the urge to smoke or feel a bit restless, irritable, frustrated or tired. Some people find it difficult to sleep or concentrate.

Remember **the symptoms will pass** and there are things you can do to manage them in the meantime. If you decide to use a form of NRT (nicotine replacement therapy) in your stop smoking attempt, your GP or stop smoking advisor should be able to explain the importance of getting enough nicotine to overcome withdrawal symptoms.

## Cravings

When you stop smoking you are likely to experience cravings. This is because your body is craving nicotine. There are two types of cravings:

- A steady, background desire for a cigarette – this normally decreases in intensity over several weeks after quitting
- A sudden burst of a more intense desire for a cigarette – this is normally triggered by something, for example at a time of day when you'd usually have a cigarette, or if you're feeling stressed.

These urges will get less frequent and less intense over time. It's a good idea to try and be prepared for these cravings, by having a plan in place to help you deal with them.

## How can I cope with withdrawal symptoms?

If you find yourself thinking about having a cigarette, try these distractions:

- Talk to someone – call a friend for support
- Do some activity, like going for a brisk walk – exercise may help reduce nicotine cravings and relieve withdrawal symptoms
- Stay busy – download the Smokefree app ([www.smokefreeapp.com](http://www.smokefreeapp.com)) or play a game on your phone
- Drink a glass of water or find something to distract yourself – keep yourself occupied for those crucial few minutes and find something to keep your hands busy
- A change of scene – try moving to another room or go outside for some fresh air.

If you're struggling to cope, remind yourself why you're stopping. Remember the health and financial benefits for you and your family. And there are lots of people to help you.

## What if I start smoking again?

If you lapse, don't worry. You haven't failed. It's a small setback and it's always worth continuing. The best time to try to quit again is straight away.

## What if I have a cigarette?

- If you do have a cigarette, stop again immediately.
  - Throw away the rest of the pack.
  - Go for a walk, drink some water and take a deep breath.
  - Ask yourself if you really want to be a smoker again.
- 
- Think about what made you slip up.
  - Be positive and put it behind you.
  - Remember why you wanted to stop.
  - If the method you're using isn't working for you, try something else.
  - Remind yourself you are a non-smoker.

When the time is right, spend a bit longer planning. Think what really worked for you and what made you lapse. Talk to your doctor or local stop smoking service to get more help to cope with cravings this time.

**Remember:** the next time could be the last time you ever have to try.

# YOU CAN DO IT!

## Further information and support

### England

**Better health: Quit smoking**

[www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking](http://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking)

**0300 123 1044**

Lines are open 9am-8pm weekdays, 11am-4pm at the weekend.

### Scotland

**Quit your way**

[www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/quit-your-way-scotland](http://www.nhsinform.scot/campaigns/quit-your-way-scotland)

**0800 84 84 84**

Lines are open 8am-10pm weekdays, 9am-5pm at the weekend.

### Wales

**Help me quit**

[www.helpmequit.wales](http://www.helpmequit.wales)

**0800 085 2219**

Lines are open Monday to Thursday, 8am -8pm, Friday 8am-5pm and Saturday 9am-4pm.

### Northern Ireland

**Want to Stop**

[www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)

For advice or to find your local stop-smoking service go to their website or text 'Quit' to 70004.

**Together we fight  
for lung health**



Helpline: **0300 222 5800**

**[AsthmaAndLung.org.uk](https://www.AsthmaAndLung.org.uk)**

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