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# Smoking: Think About Quitting

## *Part One*

### **Consider Quitting**

Decide for sure that you want to quit smoking. Promise yourself that you'll do it. It's okay to have mixed feelings. Don't let that stop you. There will be times, every day, you won't feel like quitting, but you have to stick with it anyway. Find reasons to quit that are important to you. Think of more than the health benefits, such as:

- How much money you'll save by not buying cigarettes.
- The time you'll have for yourself instead of taking cigarette breaks, rushing out to buy a pack, or searching for a light.
- Not being short of breath or coughing as much.
- Setting a better example for your children.
- Write down all the reasons why you want to quit. Keep your list where you'll see it often, such as where you keep your cigarettes, in your wallet or purse, in the kitchen or your car. When reaching for a cigarette, you'll see your list and it can remind you why you want to stop.

### **What You're Really Smoking**

Your body gets more than nicotine when you smoke. There are more than 4,000 chemicals in cigarette smoke. Some of them are also in wood varnish, insect poison, arsenic, nail polish remover and rat poison. The ashes, tar, gases and other poisons in cigarettes harm your body over time, damaging your heart and lungs. They also make it harder for you to taste, smell, and fight infection.

### **Reasons for Quitting**

You will:

- Feel healthier.
- Have more energy, improved focus, increased sense of smell and taste – not to mention whiter teeth, fresher breath, easier breathing and less coughing.
- Lower your risk for cancer, heart attacks, strokes, early death, cataracts and skin wrinkling.
- Make your partner, friends, family, kids, grandchildren co-workers and yourself proud.

- Save money, and have more of it.
- Not have to worry about when you'll be having your next cigarette, or what to do if you are going to a place where smoking is not allowed.

### **Impact on Others**

Secondhand smoke can cause cancer, breathing problems and heart disease in non-smokers:

- People exposed to secondhand smoke get colds and the flu more easily, and they often die younger.
- Pregnant women who smoke or are exposed to secondhand smoke are also at risk, such as losing their baby, small birth weight, increased risk for SIDS and kids that are cranky,



restless, often sick, and/or are more likely to have learning disabilities.

However, quitting can help you have a healthy baby. It is beneficial to quit at any time during a pregnancy, but it's best to quit before getting pregnant.

- Children exposed to secondhand smoke can experience complications as well. They are much more likely to have breathing problems like asthma, or ear and lung infections, like pneumonia.

### **Why Quitting is so Hard**

Many ex-smokers say quitting was the hardest thing they ever did. Your addiction to nicotine, a substance found in all tobacco products, is why it's so hard to stop smoking. Nicotine makes you feel calm, satisfied, alert and focused. However, the more nicotine you take in, the more you'll need in order to keep getting the same effects, and soon you won't even feel normal without it in your system.

It takes time to recover from nicotine addiction. It is not uncommon for people to make several attempts before they can quit for good. Quitting is also difficult because smoking is such a part of your life and daily routine. The simple actions of holding a cigarette, inhaling, puffing, blowing it out are all part of the addictive behavior. This is

especially true when you are feeling stressed, bored, upset or angry. After years of smoking every day, it's likely become so habitual that you may light up without even thinking about it anymore.

### **Triggers While Quitting**

You may feel uncomfortable not smoking during specific times or at places where you usually have a cigarette; these are called triggers. These situations trigger, or turn on, your cigarette cravings. For example:

- Feeling stressed or down
- Talking on the phone
- Drinking alcohol
- Watching TV
- Driving
- Finishing a meal
- Playing cards
- Taking a break
- Spending time around other smokers
- Drinking coffee
- Witnessing someone else smoke
- Cooling off after a fight or winding down after sex

Breaking these habits is the hardest part of quitting for most smokers. Knowing what your triggers are is important so you can meet them head-on. Stay away from the things that tempt you. Also, be prepared to fight those urges when they attack:

- Stay away from places that

are not smoke-free. If you are somewhere smoking is allowed, sit in non-smoking sections.

- Keep your hands busy by holding a pencil or paper clip. Doodle or write letters, or carry a water bottle.
- Stay away from others who smoke. Spend time with non-smoking friends.
- Keep something else in your mouth such as gum, a carrot or celery stick. Keep your mouth and hands occupied with toothpicks or straws.
- Drink less or stay completely away from alcohol. Drinking makes people want to smoke. Stick to juice, soda or ice water.
- Remember: The urge to smoke will come and go. Cravings usually only last for a brief time.
- Consider when you smoke and why you smoke.
- Keep a record of each cigarette you smoke for the next few weeks to help identify your triggers. You may find that you light up a lot without even thinking about it, and you'll learn which cigarettes are your favorites. This information can help you prepare to fight your smoking urges.

## **Did you know...?**

Over 438,000 Americans die each year from diseases due to smoking. That's more deaths than are caused by alcohol, cocaine, heroin, car accidents, homicides, suicides, fires, and AIDS combined!