



How to stop smoking

It's never too late to quit

If you can quit smoking, you'll live longer and feel better – however old you are. It's never too late to stop, no matter how long you have smoked for.

Quitting isn't easy, but it's the most important thing you can do to look after your health. You'll also protect the people around you from breathing in your smoke.

If you have a lung condition, you might feel you've already damaged your lungs so there's little point in quitting. But stopping smoking is a really effective way to treat and slow the progress of your lung condition. You'll feel better if you quit - you'll feel less short of breath and cough less.

There's lots of help available to quit.

You can do it. We're here to help.

Helpline 03000 030 555
helpline@blf.org.uk
blf.org.uk

Why is smoking bad for me?

Tobacco smoke contains over 5,000 chemicals including tar and nicotine. Smokers smoke for the nicotine but are harmed by the tar.

We know more than 70 of these chemicals cause cancer. Others are poisonous. When you smoke, these chemicals go straight into your lungs and through them to the rest of your body. Smoking tobacco is the biggest avoidable cause of death. On average, smokers live 10 years less than non-smokers.

There's no safe way to use tobacco:

- **Smoking cigars and pipes is just as bad for you as smoking cigarettes.**
- **Roll-up tobacco smoke contains exactly the same chemicals as manufactured cigarette smoke. Roll-ups are often made without filters so can be even more dangerous than ordinary cigarettes.**
- **Shisha smoking, also called hookah or waterpipe, also contains tobacco. The smoke goes through water, but it's just as harmful as normal cigarette smoke.**
- **Smokeless tobacco - tobacco that is chewed or sucked – is also highly addictive and harmful.**

What about e-cigarettes?

E-cigarettes are a less harmful way to receive nicotine. Unlike tobacco smoke, their vapour doesn't contain tar. There's very little evidence yet about their impact on your health. But experts agree it's unlikely to be more than 5% of the harm of smoking and e-cigarettes can be useful to help you quit.

Inhaling any smoke is harmful.

This includes smoking other substances such as cannabis. You can become addicted to cannabis, and its smoke contains cancer-causing chemicals. If you mix cannabis with tobacco and smoke it, you're at risk of becoming addicted to nicotine too.

Why am I addicted to smoking?

The tobacco industry has designed and modified cigarettes to make them as addictive as possible. The nicotine in tobacco gets rapidly into your brain and creates an addiction or craving. The falling level of nicotine in your brain creates the craving to smoke. Controlling these cravings is the key to being able to kick the habit.

Why should I quit?

By quitting, you'll live longer, feel better and have more money to spend on the things you like doing. You'll also protect people around you who used to breathe in your smoke.

- If you already have a lung condition, quitting smoking is the best step you can take for your health and quality of life. Quitting will help you cope with your symptoms and stop your condition getting worse.
- It's never too late to stop, no matter how long you have smoked for. Your lungs will work better, even if you quit when you're over 65. If you stop smoking when you're 30, you're likely to live 10 years longer.
- 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 they breathe more rapidly and their lungs are not yet fully formed.

If you smoke 20 cigarettes a day, quitting could save you more than £275 every month - that's over £3,000 a year!



How can I quit?

Make sure you get support. It's 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. Support from friends, family and professionals is really important.

Some people manage to quit smoking by going cold turkey - stopping smoking without cutting down or using nicotine replacement therapy. But you're up to four times more likely to quit successfully if you use a combination of stop smoking medication and specialist help. Lots of organisations give excellent support to help you. There's some useful contacts on page 14. Talk to your GP or pharmacist too.

Once you're ready, it's important to plan. Here are our top tips:

- Pick a date to quit and stick to it. Tell your family and friends and plan something fun to take your mind off it.
- Ask your friends and family for support. If someone close to you is thinking of stopping, why not quit at the same time so you can support each other?
- Understand situations in which you're likely to be tempted. Write them down and come up with ways to overcome the urge. For example: 'If I'm with friends who are smoking, I'll leave the room and have a glass of water.'
- Get rid of everything in your home or at work that reminds you of smoking.
- Call yourself a non-smoker and think of yourself as one.

"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

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

- **Talk to someone – call a friend or relative to get some support.**
- **Go for a brisk walk – this will help clear your head and lungs.**
- **Stay busy – download the Smokefree app or play a game on your mobile phone.**
- **Drink a glass of water or juice – keep yourself occupied for those crucial few minutes.**
- **Change the scene – just moving to another room can help, or step outside and get some fresh air.**

How quickly will I feel better?

Your health will improve in just a few hours:

after 20 minutes	Your pulse returns to normal
after 8 hours	Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in your blood fall by half 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	There is no nicotine in your body Your sense of smell and taste improve
after 72 hours	Breathing becomes easier Your energy levels rise
from 2 to 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

What about the withdrawal symptoms?

Withdrawal symptoms are different for everyone and can affect you mentally and physically. Knowing what to expect and how to deal with them helps. You might have lots of symptoms or only a few. Remember they're temporary - they'll go away once your body stops being dependent on nicotine.

% of quitters affected	symptom	duration
70%	nicotine craving	more than 2 weeks
70%	increased appetite	more than 10 weeks
60%	depression	less than 4 weeks
60%	restlessness	less than 4 weeks
60%	poor concentration	less than 2 weeks
50%	irritability or aggression	less than 4 weeks
25%	disturbed sleep	less than 1 week
10%	feeling light headed	less than 48 hours

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

Stop smoking treatments

Nicotine replacement therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) comes in lots of different forms and helps you to overcome nicotine cravings. A course usually lasts between 8 and 12 weeks. It's available on prescription. Therapies include patches, gum, sprays, lozenges and inhalators – things that look like plastic cigarettes. All these therapies release nicotine into your bloodstream without you needing to smoke.

Stop smoking medications

There are two other medications available on the NHS: varenicline (Champix) and bupropion (Zyban). Both can double your chances of quitting. They can have side effects similar to those you might get if you quit tobacco.

E-cigarettes

E-cigarettes are becoming a popular way of quitting. There's some evidence e-cigarettes can help you quit, with similar results to using NRT. Public Health England said in 2015: "best estimates show e-cigarettes are 95% less harmful to your health than normal cigarettes, and when supported by a smoking cessation service, help most smokers to quit tobacco altogether."

You can't yet get e-cigarettes as a stop smoking aid on prescription from the NHS. But stop smoking services will help you to quit if you plan to use e-cigarettes.

For advice on stop smoking treatments speak to your GP, pharmacist or a smoking cessation nurse.

What if I start smoking again?

It's OK to slip up. Don't worry. You haven't failed. It's a small setback and it's always worth continuing.

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 quit.
- 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. Decide how you're going to keep on track this time.

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

You can do it!

Further information and support

National stop-smoking helplines and websites

Calls to these helplines are free from a landline, but not from a mobile phone.

England 0300 123 1044

Lines are open daily, 9am to 8pm weekdays and 11am to 4pm at the weekend.

www.smokefree.nhs.uk

Scotland 0800 84 84 84

Lines are open daily, 8am to 10pm.

www.canstopsmoking.com

Wales 0800 085 2219

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

www.helpmequit.wales

Northern Ireland

For advice or to find your local stop-smoking service visit **www.want2stop.info** or text 'Quit' to **70004**.

Go smokefree with your mobile phone

If you have an Android phone, iPhone, iPad or iPod touch, you can download the free NHS Smokefree app. It's a four week programme that puts practical support, encouragement and tailored advice in the palm of your hand. Find out more at **www.nhs.uk/Tools/Pages/iphonesmoking.aspx**

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)

www.ash.org.uk

www.ashscotland.org.uk

www.ashwales.org.uk

Am I ready to quit?

If you're thinking about quitting, it's important that you feel ready to make the change.

Fill in this page to see if you're ready:

I smoke because...

I want to quit because...

I spend £ a week on cigarettes

This is £ a year

If I quit I could use this money on...

How I will feel when I stop...

Am I ready to quit? **yes / no**

Keep this where you can see it, such as on your fridge.

Our helpline on **03000 030 555** is there to help you.

Get in touch with us to find support near you.

Helpline: **03000 030 555**

Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

Ringing our helpline never costs more than a local call and is usually free, even from a mobile.

helpline@blf.org.uk

blf.org.uk

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Registered charity in England and Wales (326730), Scotland (038415) and the Isle of Man (1177)



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We value feedback on our information. To let us know your views, and for the most up to date version of this information and references, call the helpline or visit **blf.org.uk**