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QUITTING SMOKING

Did you know that Canada has one of the lowest smoking rates in the world? Between 2001 and 2009 the amount of smokers in the country dropped by 500,000 people. While admirable, 18% of the population still smokes. Considering the widely known hazards of smoking – like the 50 cancer-causing chemicals in a cigarette for example – it is surprising that so many people continue to smoke.

Of course, quitting smoking is not easy. Smoking a cigarette sends nicotine to the brain, a drug which is both highly addictive and pleasurable. It's easy to see why smoking is difficult to give up.



But every smoker is capable of stopping, whether they smoke occasionally or have an expensive two-pack-a-day habit. There are countless methods available to help a person quit.

Here are a few tips to help you along the journey.
*Source: Health Canada

1. Make a for-and-against list that you can always refer to through the process of quitting. In one column write down your reasons for smoking and in the other your reasons for quitting.
2. Write down your plan for quitting, which can in-

clude your reasons, potential pitfalls, stages of progress, and how you'll deal with temptations.

3. Think positively, especially by focusing one day at a time on each of your achievements.
4. Be sure to ask for help and support from those around you. Having at least one friend you can count on and share your feelings with may improve your chances of quitting for good. If your partner smokes, see if you can encourage him or her to join you on your journey.
5. Decide whether you're going to quit cold turkey or gradually, and what kind of professional support services you want to use, if any. You may want to consider counselling, group programs or nicotine replacement therapies.
6. Learn about and prepare yourself for possible withdrawal symptoms.
7. If you slip up, don't be too hard on yourself. Stay focused and stick to your quit plan. Look at what triggered the lapse and figure out how to handle it differently next time. A slip or two does not mean you've failed in your effort to quit.
8. Don't worry about weight gain, it doesn't hap-

For many people, withdrawal is at its worst for the first few days after they stop smoking.

It begins to lessen after 3 or 4 days. After a week to 10 days all withdrawal symptoms should be gone.

HOW TO QUIT SMOKING

pen to everyone and is often insignificant when it does. Control it by sticking to the same diet you usually eat, choosing low-calorie snacks, and increasing exercise and physical activity.

9. If you experience cravings, try the four Ds: Delay, Distract, Deep Breathing and Drink Water.
10. If you believe you're someone who smokes to deal with stress, look into new ways of coping; there are many.



Have you ever heard anyone talk about the stages of grief? There are stages to quitting smoking as well. Smokers generally go through five successive stages in the process of quitting, each involving different issues and challenges. Recognizing the difficulty you may face while quitting smoking may make it easier for you to face these tests.

1. **Pre-contemplation** (not thinking about quitting) People who are at this stage are not really thinking about quitting, and if challenged, will probably defend their smoking behaviour. They may be discouraged about previous attempts to quit or believe they're too addicted to ever stop smoking. These smokers are not likely to be receptive to messages about the health benefits of quitting. But at some point, the great majority of "pre-contemplators" begin thinking about quitting.
2. **Contemplation** (thinking about quitting but not ready to quit) During this stage, smokers are considering quitting sometime in the near future (probably six months or less). They are more aware of the personal consequences and consider smoking a problem that needs resolution. Consequently, they're more open to receiving

information about smoking and identifying the barriers that prevent them from quitting.

3. **Preparation** (getting ready to quit) In the preparation stage, smokers have made the decision to quit and are getting ready to stop smoking. They see the "cons" of smoking as outweighing the "pros" and are taking small steps towards quitting. For example, in their initial planning phases, they may be smoking fewer cigarettes. They make statements such as "This is serious... something has to change" and may actually set a date to quit smoking.
4. **Action** (quitting) In this stage, people are actively trying to stop smoking, perhaps using short-term rewards to keep themselves motivated and often turning to family, friends and others for support. They mentally review their commitment to themselves and firm-up action plans to deal with both personal and external pressures that could lead to slips. This stage, generally lasting up to six months, is the period during which smokers need the most help and support.
5. **Maintenance** (remaining a non-smoker) Former smokers in the maintenance stage have learned to anticipate and handle temptations to smoke and are able to use new ways of coping with stress, boredom and social pressures that had been part of their "smoker's identity." Although they may slip and have a cigarette, they try to learn from the slip so it doesn't happen again. This helps to give them a stronger sense of control and the ability to stay smoke free.

*Source: Health Canada

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Source: Health Canada



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