

Quitting Tobacco Tips

Dealing with withdrawal, cravings, and relapse when trying to quit tobacco – simply put – is hard. The following is a list of ideas pulled from many reputable resources that have helped other people trying to quit tobacco, and they may help you, too. Try the ones you think will work for you. If one does not work, try another. The idea here is to give you many options in the hope that you will be able to find what works for you...without having to go out and look up countless resources for a suggestion in the midst of a difficult time. So, take a few moments now to look through the ideas, and consider which ones you might find helpful as you're planning your quit tobacco process.

As you read these tips, remember, some of them may sound strange to you. Don't let that stop you from finding what works for you. In fact, when something doesn't work for you, try the "strange" suggestion and see what happens – sometimes the ideas we find the oddest are actually the ones we need to help us.



Coping Strategies

- Come to tough situations prepared for pauses in conversation. Prepare a list of interesting things you can talk about. Most importantly, have a ready and automatic response if you are offered a tobacco product.
- Never allow yourself to think that "one won't hurt," because it may.
- Concern yourself only with today – get through today without tobacco – tomorrow will take care of itself. Remember that symptoms associated with quitting are temporary. You will learn to live well and healthily without tobacco.
- Keep in mind that the urge to use tobacco usually only lasts 3–5 minutes. Use these and other tips to get you through the tough times.
- If you need to relieve frustration, throw darts; hit a pillow; exercise; mow the lawn or weed the flower bed; squeeze a ball; do dishes; listen to a relaxation tape or CD; throw something unbreakable; holler out loud (but not at someone); talk with someone; or write down your feelings.
- Avoid temptation by staying away from situations you associate with pleasurable smoking or tobacco use. Change your routine when you first start to quit. Instead of smoking after a meal, get up and go for a walk or brush your teeth. Instead of smoking while driving, try a new or favorite radio station; try a new or different route to work; or take the train or bus for a while. Instead of a coffee break, drink tea, or take a brisk walk. Eat breakfast in a different place.
- Anticipate future situations/crises that might make you want to smoke again, and remind yourself of your reasons to not give in. Put a list of your top five reasons to quit in places you'll see regularly (e.g., on the bathroom mirror, by the kitchen sink, in your wallet or purse, car, etc.).
- Learn to relax quickly and deeply. Relax all of your muscles. Picture a soothing, pleasant scene. Make yourself limp; visualize a soothing, pleasing situation; and get away from it all for a moment. Concentrate on that peaceful image and nothing else.
- Learn to relax quickly by taking deep breaths. Take deep, rhythmic breaths—similar to smoking—to relax; picture your lungs filling with clean air. Or take 10 slow, deep breaths and hold the last one; then breathe out slowly. Or take 10 deep breaths, and hold the last one while lighting a match; exhale slowly, and blow out the match; pretend it is a cigarette, and put it out in an ashtray.
- Go outside or to a different room when something in your surroundings triggers a craving.

- Think positive thoughts, and try to avoid negative ones.
- Write or talk about your feelings related to quitting.
- If you feel you're about to use tobacco, delay. Tell yourself you will wait 10 minutes. Even the most intense craving lasts only a few minutes...5–10 minutes at the most. The urge will pass whether you smoke or not. Often this simple trick of delaying will help you move beyond a strong urge.
- Review your reasons for quitting, and think of all the benefits to your health, your family, and your finances. Think of your most important reason for wanting to stop tobacco use. Say it out loud in front of the mirror.
- Tell yourself "no." Say it out loud. Practice doing this a few times, and listen to yourself. Some other things you can say to yourself might be, "I'm too strong to give in to smoking"; "I'm a nonsmoker now"; or "I don't want to let my friends and family down."
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Drink a lot of water and fruit juice (look for low sugar content and 100 percent juice). Curb your use of alcohol, caffeine, and other beverages you associate with smoking. Alcohol can also weaken your resolve about staying quit. Try non-alcoholic cocktails, if desired.
- Eat several small meals during the day instead of one or two large ones. This maintains constant blood sugar levels and helps prevent the urge to smoke. Avoid sugary or spicy foods that may trigger a desire for cigarettes.
- Keep oral substitutes handy: carrots, pickles, apples, celery, raisins, sunflower seeds, or sugar-free gum.
- Get plenty of rest. Take naps.
- If you are using medicine to help you quit, don't quit using it after a day or two. Stay with it according to directions and the advice of your health care provider.



Keeping Busy Strategies

- Spend as much free time as possible in places where smoking isn't allowed (especially the first

few days after you quit smoking, but also during rough times) – libraries, malls, department stores, museums, theaters, churches, etc. Later on you will be able to handle places with people using tobacco with more confidence.

- If you miss the feeling of having a cigarette in your hand, play with something else—a pencil, a paper clip, a coin, a marble, a water bottle, etc.
- If you miss the feeling of having something in your mouth, try toothpicks, cinnamon sticks, sugar-free lollipops, hard candy, gum, celery, or carrot sticks.
- Exercise. Take a long walk; walk the dog; go bike riding; try other physical activities (e.g., karate, yoga, bowling, hiking, tennis, swimming, softball).
- Try doing brief bursts of exercise (pushups, deep knee bends, walk up a flight of stairs, or touch your toes).
- Do activities around the home (gardening; cleaning out and organizing a closet, garage, or attic; painting; decorating; washing the car; organizing a yard sale; or cooking).
- Work on a hobby, or take up a new one. Play a musical instrument; start a collection; knit; sew; do woodworking; write; read; or do puzzles.
- Go to a movie.
- Clip coupons.
- Play cards.
- Do a puzzle or crossword.
- Get a manicure or pedicure.
- Brush your teeth and/or use mouthwash.
- Take a shower or bath.
- Wash your hands or the dishes.
- Light incense or a candle instead of a cigarette.

Reward Strategies

- Reward yourself. Plan to do something fun for doing your best.
- Plan a day full of pleasurable activities; then plan something enjoyable every day.
- Make a list of the money you'll save not smoking and a list of rewards you could purchase with that money. Be sure to reward yourself incrementally – don't wait until you are smoke-free for a month; reward yourself for getting through the first day, then the first week, etc. Celebrate your important milestones.

- Give yourself a financial incentive by putting the money you would have spent on tobacco products in a glass jar. For a pack-a-day smoker, this could be \$1,500 a year or more.
- Commit yourself in writing to a specific reward for a specific accomplishment. Write a contract (e.g., state your name, number of days you'll stay quit to fulfill the contract, exact time you will complete the contract, and a reward for completing it). Sign the contract, and have a friend or family member sign as a "witness" for accountability. Keep the contract. If it motivates you, write a negative consequence for not keeping the contract (e.g., cleaning the garage, buying lunch for the person who nags you the most about quitting tobacco, or deep cleaning your spouse's car).



Support Strategies

- Seek the company of non-smokers more often. Remember, most people don't smoke. So, if you must be in a place where smoking is allowed, for example at a party, try to be near non-smokers where you might not be as easily tempted.
- Call a supportive friend, family member, or quitline counselor.
- Join a club or support group.
- Have someone over or a family get-together.
- Get a "buddy." This "buddy" would be someone you could call on when you're going through a rough spot, or someone who would be willing to help motivate and encourage you in ways that work for you. You might want to have a "buddy" who is also trying to quit tobacco or a former tobacco user who can understand what you are going through.
- See your doctor or other health care provider for motivation and advice on quitting.

"Slip" Strategies

- If you "slip" and use tobacco, understand that it is a small setback and doesn't make you a smoker again. The difference between a "slip" and a total relapse is within your control. Don't say, "Well, I've blown it. I might as well smoke the rest of this pack." Get right back on your no-tobacco track, remembering that the ultimate goal is no tobacco, not one puff or pinch.
- If you "slip" and use tobacco, feel good about the time you went without tobacco. Try to identify what triggered you to use tobacco, and learn from the "slip" how to make your coping skills better.

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