

Health and Wellness Article

8 strategies to outsmart nicotine

By Shannon Spence

The last thing any tobacco user wants to hear are the words, “You should quit.” Hearing that actually has the power to reverse the intended outcome, especially when you consider that most tobacco users tend to be on the rebellious side. Yes, that means you. But deep down, at the center of your being, you know you’re endangering your health (and the health of others) and have most likely considered giving up the habit a few times.

Did you know that [68.9 percent of adult smokers](#) want to quit? What you may not know is that in order for most people to quit using tobacco for good, it takes multiple attempts. And each time, you learn more about the quitter in you, becoming wiser about what to do and what not to do on your next attempt. Don’t give up! With perseverance, determination, and planning, you can kick the tobacco habit for good.

If you’re ready to give it a try, start considering strategies to help you stay the course. Regardless of how you choose to quit, no method will work if you’re not seriously committed. Check out what’s worked for other quitters, and remember, there is no right or wrong way to quit. It’s whatever speaks to you.

Recognize (and avoid) triggers

When are you most likely to light up? Maybe it’s with your morning cup of coffee, on your drive to work, or at happy hour with friends. Think about changing your routine for these rituals. Maybe you can go for a brief walk in the morning with your coffee. Take a different route to work. Go out with friends who don’t smoke and make sure they know of your plan to quit. Support is a powerful thing when it comes to changing a habit.

Don’t have just one

Though it’s tempting to just have one, the result is what you would expect. A bad taste in your mouth, a feeling of “this is why I quit,” followed by “I think I can have just one when I feel like it and not be in danger of starting the habit again.” Wrong. Getting back into the habit is a slippery slope and even when you think you’re strong enough, the nicotine monster does a good job of slowly sneaking back into your regular routine. Be careful about just having that one cigarette or dose of tobacco.

Hold off for a few

Have a craving? It won’t last. According to experts, most cravings last [less than five minutes](#). Do something to take your mind off it. One idea is to keep a book close by on a subject that interests you. Each time you have a craving,

QUIZ TIME

[Test your nicotine IQ](#) and see what happens when you quit.

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read a few pages, highlighting passages as you go. This will keep your mind and hands busy while you wait out your craving.

Relax the right way

Many people view smoking or using tobacco as an effective way to relax. In fact, researchers at the University of East London found that [tobacco use actually increases anxiety and tension](#). Try relaxing with a healthier pastime such as yoga, meditation, or breathing exercises.

Visualize the positive, over and over

This strategy is simple. Remind yourself of why you're quitting, and do it often. It may help to write down your reasons for quitting on multiple index cards and place them around so you're constantly seeing these reminders. It's also smart to develop a mantra that sums up why you're quitting (e.g., "I want to live longer," "My health matters to me more than tobacco," etc.).

Read about it

The Easy Way to Quit Smoking by Allen Carr takes a unique look at what it means to be a smoker. It can help you change your perspective on smoking and understand why you're still smoking rather than listing all of the reasons you should quit.

Rely on technology

If you need support in the form of a program, you can find multiple resources online to help you stay on track. Stay motivated on the go by downloading [a quitting smoking app](#) to your smartphone. Track your progress, how much money you've saved and get support for cravings that strike throughout the day.

Get support

Many people who try to quit cold turkey are not successful. Many studies show that people who stop using tobacco with the help of over-the-counter or prescription medications are more likely to stay tobacco-free. When combined with one-on-one or group counseling, this can be an effective method to kick the habit. Check out The American Lung Association's [Freedom from Smoking](#) program, which offers eight weekly sessions at hospitals nationwide. Phone counseling is also offered in every state at 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

Quitting tobacco is not easy but it is possible. With support, determination, and a little practice, you can and will become a nonsmoker. Remember to be kind to yourself throughout this process. Adopt strategies that work for you and be sure to stay active, drink lots of water and continue to remind yourself why you are a nonsmoker. You can do this!

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Sources

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