

HEALTH ACTION CAMPAIGN

because prevention is better than cure

Quitting smoking



"Quitting smoking has given me new self-confidence. And you can have that feeling as well. All you have to do is stop smoking. Trust me, it's the best thing you'll ever do."

Dr Max Pemberton, NHS Doctor, journalist and author

Did you know?

If you smoke 10 a day, after one month of giving up you'll have saved at least £46, and after six months you'll have banked £275.

Find a personal motivation

There are countless reasons to quit smoking, but it's important to find what resonates best with you. According to the NHS, you won't be waiting long to see benefits. After just 20 minutes smoke free, your pulse returns to normal. After only 48 hours, carbon monoxide will be eliminated from

your body and your lungs will start to clear out mucus and other smoking debris. After a year, your risk of heart disease is about half compared with a person who is still smoking.

Have confidence in your ability to make a change

A study into motivating and helping smokers to quit concluded that the most important aspect to smoking cessation is maintaining the motivation to make multiple attempts. The study says that in theory, even if you find yourself needing to quit multiple times, each time is like practicing a new skill – you should be reassured that the probability of successfully quitting increases with each try.

Set SMART goals and measure success

The biggest measure of success when trying to quit smoking is to stop smoking and stay smoke free. One study claims that reducing cigarettes slowly and going cold turkey are both effective - but what is important with both approaches is to set a firm date to become tobacco free. There are other goals you can set yourself to stay motivated, like doing a particular form of exercise without getting out of breath.

Find interventions that work for you

Speak to your GP about available support for quitting smoking. You may choose to use a combination of medication such as nicotine gum or patches, alongside therapies such as attending a counselling group or receiving support on the phone. A systematic review of the evidence explored the effectiveness of support offered via a mobile phone in smoking cessation, physical activity, diet and alcohol reduction. It included 18 research studies related to helping people to quit smoking and concluded that support offered via text message does increase rates of smoking cessation.

Seek support

The NHS claims that people are up to four times more likely to quit smoking successfully with the support of a local stop smoking service. They also advise that quitting will be easier if you spend time with smoke-free friends. For some people, the likelihood of quitting successfully might be heightened by finding group sessions with other people trying to quit. An American study with 965 participants in Baltimore City concluded that

providing cessation services in community settings and involving the community in every aspect of the intervention improves retention and achieves better smoking cessation outcomes.

Be flexible to stay on track

Life can throw up some challenges, but it's generally recognised that positive changes can have a knock-on positive effect elsewhere. A nine-year, nationwide survey of more than 5,000 middle-aged people in Japan showed a clear association between stopping smoking and changes in marital status, job status and other health behaviours. If your quit attempts aren't working, try making a change elsewhere then try again.

Case study:

Dr Max Pemberton, a British medical doctor, journalist and author, works full-time as a psychiatrist for the NHS. He couldn't give up smoking, despite knowing exactly what it was doing to his health. He developed and tested a CBT programme to help him think differently about smoking and finally quit the habit for good.

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