



American
Heart
Association.

ANSWERS
by heart



Lifestyle + Risk Reduction
Smoking

How Can I Quit Smoking?

Smoking harms almost every tissue and organ in the body, including your heart and blood vessels. Nicotine, one of the main chemicals in cigarettes, causes your heart to beat faster and your blood pressure to rise. Carbon monoxide from smoking also gets into the blood and robs your body of oxygen. Nonsmokers who are exposed to secondhand smoke are also harmed.

If you smoke or vape, you have good reason to worry about its effect on your health and the health of your loved ones and others.

Deciding to quit is a big step. Following through is just as important. Quitting tobacco and nicotine addiction isn't easy, but others have done it, and you can, too.



Is it too late to quit smoking or vaping?

It's never too late to quit. Quitting smoking has both short-term and long-term benefits for lowering your cardiovascular risk. No matter how much or how long you've smoked when you quit, your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop. People who quit smoking generally live longer than people who continue to smoke.

While you may crave tobacco or nicotine after quitting, most people feel that becoming tobacco-free is the most positive thing they've ever done for themselves.

How do I quit?

You are more likely to quit for good if you prepare for two things: your last cigarette and the cravings, urges and feelings that come with quitting. Think about quitting in five steps:

1. **Set a quit day.** Choose a date within the next seven days when you will quit smoking or vaping. Tell your family members and friends who are most likely to support your efforts.
2. **Choose a method for quitting.** There are several ways to

quit, including:

- Stopping all at once on your quit day.
- Cutting down the number of cigarettes per day or how many times you vape until you stop completely.
- Smoking only part of each cigarette. If you use this method, you need to count how many puffs you take from each cigarette and reduce the number every two to three days.

3. **Decide whether you need medications or other help to quit.** Talk with your health care professional to find out which medicine is best for you. Get instructions for using it. Therapies may include nicotine replacement (gum, lozenges, spray or patches) or prescription medications, such as bupropion hydrochloride or varenicline. You could also ask about a referral for a smoking cessation program.
4. **Plan for your quit day.** Get rid of all the cigarettes, matches, lighters, ashtrays and smoking products in your home, office and car. Find healthy substitutes for smoking. Go for walks. Keep sugarless gum or mints with you. Munch carrots or celery sticks.
5. **Stop smoking on your quit day.**

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What if I smoke or vape after quitting?

It's hard to stay off tobacco and nicotine once you've given in, so do everything you can to avoid that "one." The urge will pass. The first two to five minutes will be the toughest. If you do smoke or vape after quitting:

- This doesn't mean you're a smoker again — do something now to get back on track.
- Don't punish or blame yourself — tell yourself you're still a nonsmoker.
- Think about what triggered the urge and decide what to do differently the next time.
- Sign a contract to stay tobacco-free.

What happens after I quit?

- Your senses of smell and taste improve.
- Your smoker's cough will go away.
- You'll breathe more easily.
- You'll be free from the mess and smell and the burns on your clothing.
- You'll increase your chances of living longer and lower your risk of heart disease and stroke.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families, at HeartInsight.org.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

When will the urges stop?

How can I keep from gaining weight?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk of heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.