

Your Best Quit Plan

Quit plans are not one size fits all. The best plan for you depends on when and why you smoke. How you answer the following questions will help you build a quit plan that can boost your odds of quitting successfully.

Do you smoke to deal with stress or unpleasant emotions? If so, you will need to plan other ways to deal with these feelings. Because if you feel stressed, depressed, lonely, anxious, or bored now, you will still feel that way after you quit.

Here's what to do:

Exercise is one of your best options for coping with both stress and painful feelings. Sleep is also your ally. Other tools include relaxation skills such as meditation. Mindfulness-based stress reduction classes are another great tool. You may also need a way to process—experience and move through—strong feelings. Try drawing, journaling, or talking to a trusted friend or counselor.

Are you heavily addicted to nicotine? If you smoke more than one pack a day, you will need a plan that eases withdrawal symptoms.

Here's what to do:

Talk with your doctor about quit medicines. Light or social smokers might do all right with a nicotine patch they buy at the store. But heavy or long-term smokers may need both nicotine replacement therapy, like gum or the patch, and prescription quit medicine. Your doctor can guide you. You will also need a plan to cope with cravings. An engaging hobby or new interest can be helpful.

Is your smoking habit linked to certain people, places, or activities? If so, then you will need a plan to deal with your smoking triggers.

Here's what to do:

Start by making a list of all of your smoking triggers. Some people smoke first thing in the morning. Others smoke after meals. Perhaps your trigger is a favorite chair or your smoking buddies at work. Other people pair smoking with coffee, soda, or alcohol. Write down each of your triggers. For each, write down at least one way to avoid or deal with that trigger.

Here are 4 more key steps to put in every quit plan:

- Set a quit date. Choose a date in the next 2 weeks so your motivation stays high.
- Let people know you're quitting. Write down names and ask for specific support.
- Remove all cigarettes, ashtrays, and smoking reminders. Set a date for this.
- Reward yourself. Plan small and big rewards for each step of the process.

Quitting is never easy, but a good plan will guide you through the rough parts.

