Stop smoking for good

If you smoke, quitting is the single best step you can take to improve your health. You’ll significantly lower your risk for a long list of deadly diseases, including lung cancer, heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It’s not easy to quit, but the good news is that there’s a lot of help available. And the more support you have, the better your chances of success. Check out the suggestions below and the resources listed at the end of the article. Then log in to blueshieldca.com/hlr, click on Health Programs and select Tobacco Use to start our smoking cessation program. You may also want to talk to your doctor about nicotine replacement medication.

Tips to help you quit:

- Keep a picture of your loved ones handy for extra incentive, to remind yourself that you’re not just quitting for your own sake.
- Avoid sugary or spicy foods – for many smokers, these trigger the urge for a cigarette.
- Eat four or five small meals during the day instead of one or two big ones. This will help keep your blood sugar and energy levels steady, and lessen your need to smoke.
- Steer clear of alcohol. A few drinks can seriously weaken your resolve to quit.
- If you feel like you absolutely have to have a cigarette, make yourself wait 10 minutes. Often, once you get past the 10 minutes, you’ll find that the need to smoke has waned.
- If you’re used to having a cigarette in your hand, hold onto something else, like a squeeze ball, a coin, or a pencil.
- If you miss the feeling of a cigarette in your mouth, try toothpicks, cinnamon sticks, straws, or sugarless gum or lollipops instead.
- Keep a supply of edible cigarette substitutes on hand, so you’ll have something to chew on when a cigarette craving strikes. Carrots, apples, oranges, and celery sticks are some healthy, low-calorie choices.
- Avoid temptation and spend your free time in places where smoking is banned, particularly when you’ve just quit. Museums, libraries, malls, theaters, restaurants, and churches are all good options.
- Instead of a cigarette break, take a short exercise break. Walk around the block (avoiding places where smokers gather) or up a few flights of stairs, do some stretches or yoga poses, or knock off a few quick situps or pushups.
• When you’re feeling antsy and need a little moral support, talk to an understanding coworker, or call a friend, family member, or stop-smoking telephone hotline.

• Prepare yourself by thinking of the ways you may rationalize having a cigarette. Then you’ll be ready to resist when that little voice in your head says “One won’t hurt” or “Today is too stressful, I’ll quit tomorrow.”

• Every day, set aside the money you would have spent on cigarettes. Save it for a major goal, or use a little as a weekly treat for not smoking. Quitting is tough – you’ve earned a reward.

• Stay active. Whether you’re walking the dog, learning tai chi, or cleaning your closets, it will help you keep your mind off smoking and burn off the pent-up energy you’re likely to have when quitting.

• When you wake up each morning, take a moment to promise yourself that you won’t smoke that day. Handle the effort one day at a time.

• If you DO slip and have a cigarette, don’t lose faith and give up altogether. Try to figure out why you had a setback, so you don’t repeat it. Then remind yourself of all the good reasons for quitting, and start again right away.

Congratulations on taking a giant step toward living a longer, healthier life. We know quitting can be really hard, and we’re there to support you whenever you need help.

**Healthy Lifestyle Rewards**

You can find useful information at Healthy Lifestyle Rewards, an online program that helps you work on living a healthy lifestyle.

Personalized tools and programs can help you quit smoking, as well as eat healthy, exercise regularly, and more. Just log in once a week, use the tools and programs, and begin reaping all the rewards of a healthy lifestyle.

To get started today, register at blueshieldca.com/hlr. To find resources to help you quit smoking, log in and click on Health Programs, then select Tobacco Use.

**More resources**

The California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS) provides free professional and confidential telephone counseling for anyone living in California, whether you currently smoke, have already quit, or want information for a friend or relative.

You can also go to blueshieldca.com/hw and click on Health Library to research a specific health topic or condition, learn about complementary treatments, and discover how the body holistically interacts with itself.