

SMOKING CESSATION

Make A Pledge

It's important to make a commitment to stop smoking and to acknowledge the many reasons why you want to quit and why you should quit. Commit to quitting by designing your own pledge, listing why you want to quit and signing it. Try to frame your reasons in the positive: how do you want your life to look and feel? Keep your pledge and list with you. Add to it if necessary. Be sure to review the pledge and your reasons for quitting often, such as each morning when you wake or whenever you feel a craving to smoke. If you're having trouble coming up with your own pledge, use one like this:

"I pledge my commitment to quit smoking forever. I have set the following quit date of 00-00-2009 to quit. I wish to quit smoking for the following reasons:" Choose a date, list your reasons and sign your pledge.

Assess Your Dependence

There are few tools out there to help you define your level of addiction. Knowing where you stand may help in your planning and may help your doctor with treatment suggestions. The American Academy of Family Physicians lists [FOUR ASSESSMENTS](#) both you and your physician can use to help determine just how serious your addiction is.

- CAGE Questionnaire
- The Four Cs Test of Addiction
- The Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence
- Smoker's Profile Test

Understand Why You Smoke

If you can assess what triggers you to smoke, you have a much better chance of breaking the habit.

Stress Relief

Most smokers report that one reason they smoke is to handle stress. Think about the last time you were frustrated or angry. Did you automatically think about smoking a cigarette? Examine what is causing you stress. If you rely on cigarettes when you're under stress, you'll need better coping mechanisms if you want to stop smoking. Exercise may be the very best relaxation technique of all and [exercise has many other benefits](#) as well, such as improving your mood, sleep and energy levels. Be sure to make time to de-stress by taking a warm bath or listening to music. Apply the amount of time you smoked to relaxation techniques or "me" time.

- [Stress Management from WebMD](#)
- [Stress Management and Smoking from the Cleveland Clinic](#)
- [Stress Management Techniques](#)
- [Instant Stress Relief](#)

Conditioned Responses

At what times do you have to have a cigarette? Most smokers reach for that cigarette or two while drinking a cup of coffee, driving their car or engaging in other daily routines. In addition, there are people and places that most smokers associate with smoking. These are conditioned responses or habits. The good news is that you can develop strategies to help break these habits. For example, if you smoke while you drive, listen to a book on CD, carpool with a non-smoking friend or chew gum. For every situation, come up with 4-5 coping strategies.

Relief of Withdrawal Symptoms

Do you smoke your first cigarette of the day within an hour of waking up? Do you get irritable if you can't smoke? Then you may smoke to relieve withdrawal symptoms. If this is the case, be sure to talk to your doctor. Your doctor can help you with these symptoms. You can also plan ahead for withdrawal symptoms. If you have a cough, sip warm tea or suck on cough drops for relief. If you are constipated, drink plenty of water and increase your fiber intake. If you feel irritable, listen to soothing music, take a walk or call a friend. For every symptom, list several management strategies and be prepared.

Elevate Mood

Many people smoke because they are trying to regulate their brain's chemistry. Research has found that over 40% of those with a mood disorder self-medicate by smoking. And that's not all: research suggests that the relationship between depression and smoking may be bidirectional: depression increases the risk of smoking, and chronic smoking increases a person's susceptibility to depression.

Discuss Options with Your Doctor

There are several medications used to treat nicotine withdrawal symptoms. Talk to your doctor about how these medications can help you quit smoking. Medications on the market include the following:

Nicotine Replacement Therapies

- Gum (brand name: Nicorette)
- Patch (brand names: Habitrol, Nicoderm, Nicotrol)
- Nasal spray (brand name: Nicotrol NS)
- Inhaler (brand name: Nicotrol Inhaler)
- Lozenge (brand name: Commit)

Bupropion

Bupropion (brand names Zyban, Wellbutrin) is a pill you take to reduce your craving for tobacco. It is not a nicotine replacement therapy medication. Originally designed as an antidepressant, bupropion is now approved for smoking cessation as well as seasonal affective disorder. Studies show that it reduces cravings, irritability and anxiety in those who are attempting to quit smoking. For more on bupropion, visit [WebMD](#), [Drugs.com](#), and [MedlinePlus](#).

Varenicline

Varenicline (brand name Chantix) stimulates the release of low levels of dopamine and blocks nicotine receptors in your brain. For more on varenicline, visit [Drugs.com](#), and [MedlinePlus](#).

Nortriptyline

Nortriptyline (brand names Aventyl, Norventyl) has not been approved for use in smoking cessation, but is approved for depression. Some studies reveal it doubles the success of quitting smoking but it has more severe side effects than other medications. For more on nortriptyline, visit [WebMD](#), [Drugs.com](#), and [MedlinePlus](#).