

# Smoking and diabetes:

a cause for alarm

## What effect will quitting have on my health?

By quitting smoking, you can:

Reduce your chance of having a heart attack or stroke.

Improve your blood flow and breathing.

These will make you feel better today and help keep you healthy in the future.

Most people today are familiar with the dangers of cigarette smoking. We hear it all the time on television and radio. We read about it in magazines: Cigarette smoking causes lung disease, cancer, and other health problems.

But did you know that smoking has special dangers for people with diabetes? That's because smoking and diabetes can raise the risk of damage to your eyes, kidneys, heart, and nerves. And, if you smoke and have diabetes, you are 3 times more likely to die of heart or blood vessel disease than people with diabetes who do not smoke. So, while it's important for *everyone* to stop smoking, it's more urgent for people who have diabetes.

## What other effects does smoking have on my health?

Besides raising blood sugar, smoking can also:

- Damage your blood vessels
  - This means you're more likely to have a heart attack, stroke, or leg and foot infections.
- Increase your blood pressure
  - This means you're more likely to have a heart attack or stroke.

So, if you smoke and you have diabetes, you should make the decision to quit—today.

## Why is it so hard to stop smoking?

Cigarettes contain a chemical called nicotine. The more you smoke, the more your body gets used to the nicotine. Your body gets so used to it, it misses the nicotine when you do not smoke. You get strong urges to light up another cigarette. This is called an addiction. Addictions are very hard to get over.

## OK, so how can I quit?

Your first step is to talk to your primary healthcare provider. He or she can give you some good advice and tools to get you going in the right direction, including treatment options that may be right for you. If you decide to quit, there are a few ways to go about it:

### “Cold turkey”

- Some people can decide to quit smoking and stop right then and there. But most people do better if they quit gradually or pick a date in the future to quit and have time to prepare for it.

### Gradually, by yourself or with a group

- Reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke each day, until you quit for good.
- Here are 2 tips that can help:
  - Have your first cigarette of the day later in the day.
  - Smoke only half of each cigarette.

### By setting a target date

- Pick a date in the future to stop smoking and commit yourself to that date.





For more information, visit the following websites:

[www.cdc.gov/tobacco/how2quit.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/how2quit.htm)

[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

[www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco)

- Start changing your habits to get ready for your target date by using some of these tips:
  - **Make smoking less convenient.** Start buying only packs of cigarettes, not cartons.
  - **Make smoking less appealing.** Start buying a cigarette brand that does not taste as good to you.
  - **Stop and think.** Before reaching for a cigarette out of habit, ask yourself whether you really want it.
- On your target date and during the next few days:
  - Throw away all your cigarettes and matches. Put away your lighters and ashtrays.
  - Stay busy. Plan some fun activities to take your mind off smoking.
  - Surround yourself with a fresh, clean, nonsmoking environment.

### I'm not sure I can do it alone.

If you need the support of a group, the following organizations may run free or low-cost classes in your area:

- American Cancer Society
- American Lung Association
- YMCA

Talk to your healthcare provider if you decide to quit. He or she can offer you advice on the best way to kick your habit.

### I've tried to quit before and it did not work. What else can I do?

Quitting can be hard to do, but it's well worth it! The important thing is to try again. You can do it!

Here are some tips to call it quits:

#### Forgive yourself

- If you slipped and had a cigarette, it does not mean you're a smoker again. Think of it as a small setback. Try again!

#### Avoid triggers

- If you had a cigarette, figure out what made you smoke that cigarette. Avoid foods, drinks, and situations that make you want to smoke.

#### Get rid of the temptation

- Find substitutes for smoking. If you feel like you need something between your fingers, hold a pen. If you need something in your mouth, chew some sugar-free gum or candy.

#### Get active

- Get involved in indoor or outdoor activities. This is healthy and will help take your mind off smoking. Talk to your healthcare provider before beginning any exercise program.

#### Enjoy the extra cash

- Imagine the money you'll save. If you smoke a lot, think about the money you're spending. It really adds up!
- Reward yourself for not smoking. For each week you go without a cigarette, buy yourself something or go out to a movie. Whatever you choose to do, reward yourself in some way. This will make you feel good about the important decision you've made.

#### Ask for help

- See your healthcare provider if you think you need professional help to kick the habit. He or she can give you extra advice and motivation.

For more information, visit MerckSource™ at [www.mercksource.com](http://www.mercksource.com).

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