



Quit Smoking Action Plan

Introduction

The American Lung Association developed the *Quit Smoking Action Plan* under the guidance of a team of experts on cigarette smoking. It offers specific recommendations for selecting a personalized *plan* to free yourself of cigarettes and stay that way.

To help you better understand your options, the material is presented in the following 3 Steps of a *Quit Smoking Action Plan*, along with charts to guide you through each step.

[Step 1 - Preparing to Quit](#)

[Step 2 - Using Medications](#)

[Step 3 - Staying Smoke-Free](#)

[Conclusion](#)

Webmaster's Note: The 'Quit Smoking Action Plan' was developed prior to the release of Freedom From Smoking® Online.

(www.ffsonline.org). FFS Online is a useful tool in quitting smoking and is free to our www.lungusa.org visitors. Please consider this option as well.

A Deadly Combination: Addiction and Behavior

Nicotine is a powerful drug that raises mood, reduces anxiety, and, in those accustomed to it, increases alertness. Over time, it causes changes in smokers' brains that make them need nicotine. Then, when they try to quit, smokers have unpleasant symptoms such as irritability, craving for cigarettes or difficulty concentrating. An additional obstacle to quitting is the many daily behavior patterns that smokers may not even realize they have, such as morning or before-

bed cigarette routines, or smoking with friends, co-workers or spouses. Each person's smoking behavior is different, but these established patterns link smoking to many activities of daily life. People who are fairly dependent on cigarettes need to incorporate multiple sources of help in their quitting plan to maximize their odds of success. Those who are less dependent on cigarettes may be successful by using only a few sources of help. However, the more help you have, the better your chances of quitting and staying smoke-free.

Be a Smart Quitter!

There are many programs to help you quit smoking. The cost of these programs may vary from almost nothing to hundreds of dollars. A higher cost does not guarantee success. Many health plans and worksites provide free quit-smoking programs and some health plans cover the cost of medications to help you quit. Check with your insurance carrier or employer for more information. Before investing your time or money in a program, ask questions such as:

- Is there a cost to you?
- Is the program convenient for you?
- Is the staff well trained and professional?
- Does the program meet your needs?
- What is the success rate of this program?

A program representative should be able to answer your questions. If they can't, keep looking. There are no tricks or magic bullets to make you stop smoking. If a program seems too easy, guarantees you will quit, or claims a success rate that sounds unrealistic, look elsewhere.

Examining Your Options

The charts on the next few pages review your options for each of the 3 steps of your *Quit Smoking Action Plan*. Although there are many sources of help available, it's best to choose what feels right to you.

The more comfortable you are with the methods you use, the better the chances that you will stick with them.

STEP #1: Preparing to Quit

What You Need to Do

1. Identify your personal reasons for quitting.
2. Set a quit date, usually within 10 days to several weeks. If you smoke mostly at work, try quitting on a weekend. If you smoke mostly when relaxing or socializing, quit on a week day.
3. Identify your barriers to quitting (such as your spouse smokes or you've relapsed before due to depression or weight gain). You'll find sources of help in this booklet to overcome these barriers.
4. Make SPECIFIC plans AHEAD OF TIME for dealing with temptations. Identify two or three coping strategies that work for you (such as taking a walk or calling a friend).
5. Get cooperation from family and friends. They can't quit for you but they can help by not smoking around you, providing a sympathetic ear and encouragement when you need it and leaving you alone when you need some space. (see: [Step #1 chart, "Preparing to Quit"](#))

STEP #2: Using Medications

What You Need To Know

When you smoke a cigarette, a high concentration of nicotine enters your body rapidly and travels to your brain. Nicotine medications provide you with a safer alternative source of nicotine that enters the body less rapidly and in a lower concentration than cigarettes. There is much unfounded concern about the safety of nicotine medications even though they have been extensively tested and used by millions of people. Unlike cigarettes, which contain thousands of harmful chemicals, nicotine medications contain small doses of nicotine alone to combat cravings and urges to smoke.

To optimize your chances of success, generally medications should be a component of your *Quit Smoking Action Plan*. However, not

everyone who decides to quit smoking will want or need to use them. Depending on the medication you use, you may need a prescription. As with any medication, consult the package directions or your pharmacist before using. If you are pregnant, consult your physician; if you are taking other medications, consult the doctor who prescribed them or your pharmacist. Your goal in using nicotine medication is to stop smoking completely. If you plan to take nicotine medications, begin using them on your quit day. If you continue to have strong urges to smoke or are struggling to stop smoking completely, ask your healthcare provider about additional help. If you take the non-nicotine medication, it should be started about 7-10 days before your target quit date.

(See: [STEP #2 chart, "Using Medications"](#))

Other Tips for Using Medications:

- Ask your physician or pharmacist for advice if you are uncertain about which medication to use.
- Learn to use the medication you choose (examples: apply patches properly, use nicotine gum, nasal spray or inhaler as recommended on package labeling).

Many experts believe nicotine medications are often taken for too short a time to be of full benefit to users. For this reason, your healthcare provider may advise you to use your medication for a longer period of time or in combination with another medication. However, if you take these medications on your own, do not deviate from package directions.

STEP #3: Staying Smoke-Free

What You Need To Remember

After quitting and getting through the first couple of weeks, staying off cigarettes is critical—and not always easy. Research indicates that continued support and encouragement from health providers, family, friends and other sources are extremely helpful. Your friends and family won't automatically know how to encourage you. Talk to them ahead of time about what they can do. Also, think about who you want to give you encouragement—someone who will stay positive even if

you have some problems along the way. (See: [STEP #3 chart, "Staying Smoke-Free"](#))

The average person makes two to four attempts at quitting before they are able to stay smoke-free. If you return to smoking, it doesn't mean you can't quit. It just means you need to try again by figuring out what caused you to slip and improving your plan for next time. You may want to use medications this time if you have tried to quit without them in the past. Or you may want to try a different group, individual counselor or other source of help if you've been unsuccessful at quitting on your own.

Some smokers wrongly believe they can reduce their health risks and continue to smoke by substituting other forms of tobacco. Low tar/ nicotine cigarettes are not safer than cigarettes, nor do they reduce your risk of smoking-related disease. Smokeless tobacco, pipes and cigars also are not safe.

Quit Smoking Action Plan: Conclusion

The information you have just read is meant to provide the knowledge you need to prepare and use your *Quit Smoking Action Plan*. Some of the main messages to keep in mind are:

- You can quit! Millions—about half of all smokers in the U.S.—already have.
- The more dependent you are on cigarettes, the harder it is to quit.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- The more sources of help you use, the better your chance of success. (See: www.ffsonline.org)

By reading *The Quit Smoking Action Plan* and understanding the roles of behavior, medications and support, you have taken a major step toward becoming smoke-free. You may want to show this information to your healthcare provider and make notes of any questions you have now.

In addition, a listing of national organizations has been included to provide you with more sources of help and guidance. Good luck and good health!

Additional American Lung Association Resources

Call your local American Lung Association at 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) to find out more about how to stop smoking for good. The Lung Association is offering a new way to stop smoking through its [Freedom From Smoking®](#) online smoking cessation clinic. The program is based on the Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking® program, which has already helped thousands of smokers quit smoking for good. The [Freedom From Smoking®](#) online smoking cessation clinic can be accessed day or night, seven days a week, on any schedule a smoker chooses.

Step #1: Preparing to Quit

Description & Examples

Pros & Cons

Comments

Group Programs

American Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking® group program offers seven sessions to help you set and follow your *Quit Smoking Action Plan*.

Also offered by many hospitals, medical facilities and by voluntary agencies.

Pros

*Supportive, encouraging environment

*Opportunity for building skills needed to quit smoking

Cons:

*Meeting schedule may not be flexible enough for some

*A group may not be available when you need it

Comments/limitations: Best for those who work well with others. The groups focus on helping you change your smoking behaviors. May also be helpful for those whose family or friends are unlikely to provide support. Usually meets for four to seven sessions with each session lasting one to two hours.

Individual Counseling From Healthcare Provider

Many healthcare providers offer individual quit-smoking programs that help you develop a *Quit Smoking Action Plan*. They should also provide encouragement for staying smoke-free and plans for coping with relapse.

Pros:

- *Flexible
- *Personalized to your needs
- *Opportunity for building skills needed to quit smoking

Cons:

- *No opportunity for peer support sharing
- *Usually requires an appointment

Comments/limitations: This may be best if you have a good relationship with your healthcare provider. Best for people who prefer to work independently rather than in group settings. The more counseling sessions you attend, the better your chances of staying smoke-free.

Books, Manuals, Audiotapes, Videotapes, and Internet Resources

ALA's *7 Steps to a Smoke-Free Life* is one of many excellent sources available.

These should be educational, informative and discuss the key parts of a *Quit Smoking Action Plan*. May be a starting point for additional help.

Pros:

- *Convenient
- *Private
- *May be especially appropriate for those who like to work on their own or enjoy "do-it-yourself" projects

Cons:

- *Success depends on continued use
- *Many are superficial and do not provide needed key elements

Comments/limitations: Although you may prefer to quit on your own, quitting without preparing an action plan is unlikely to be successful. The American Lung Association provides a variety of materials and programs, including special programs for pregnant women, African-American smokers and other populations.

Telephone Counseling

Many health providers and worksites offer telephone counseling to provide assistance in developing and following through with your *Quit Smoking Action Plan*. (Additionally, telephone counseling to provide encouragement for staying smoke-free is described later in this guide.)

Many states have smokers' help lines. For more information, call:
American Lung Association
1-(800) LUNG-USA

Pros:

- *Convenient
- *Flexible
- *Personal and private
- *Useful in rural areas or anywhere access to counseling services is limited

Cons:

- *Phone counselor may change from contact to contact
- *Lack of fixed schedule may be discouraging to some

Comments/limitations: Telephone counseling services are also sometimes used to help you stay smoke-free. Ask your healthcare provider or check your phone book for availability of these services in your area

Step #2: Using Medications

Description & Examples

Pros & Cons

Comments

Nicotine Patch

NicoDerm® CQ

Nicotrol®

Nicotine Transdermal Patch

(prescription required)

Habitrol® (prescription required)

ProStep® (prescription required)

Patches deliver nicotine through the skin in different strengths, over different lengths of time.

Pros:

- *Easy to use
- *Only needs to be applied once a day
- *Some available without a prescription
- *Few side effects

Cons:

- *Less flexible dosing
- *Slow onset of delivery
- *Mild skin rashes and irritation

Comments/limitations: Patches vary in strengths and the length of time over which nicotine is delivered. Depending on the brand you use, may be left on for anywhere from 16 to 24 hours. Some smokers who use these products can stop them abruptly, while others prefer to reduce their dosage slowly.

Nicotine Polacrilex (nicotine gum)

Nicorette®

The term "gum" is misleading. Although it actually is a gum-like substance impregnated with small amounts of nicotine, nicotine gum is not chewed like regular gum. Instead, you chew it briefly and then "park" it between your cheek and gum. The nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth.

Pros:

- *Convenient
- *Flexible dosing
- *Faster delivery of nicotine than the patches

Cons:

- *May be inappropriate for people with dental problems and those with temporomandibular joint (TMJ) syndrome
- *Cannot eat or drink while the medication is in your mouth
- *Frequent use during the day required to obtain adequate nicotine levels

Comments/limitations: Many people use this medication incorrectly. Most of the time the gum is in your mouth, it should be

"parked" between your cheek and gum. Read package directions carefully for a full explanation.

To achieve greatest benefit, you generally should chew nine or more pieces per day.

Nicotine Nasal Spray

Nicotrol® NS (prescription required)

Delivers nicotine through the lining of the nose when you squirt it directly into each nostril.

Pros:

***Flexible dosing**

***Can be used in response to stress or urges to smoke**

***Fastest delivery of nicotine of currently available products**

***Reduces cravings within minutes**

Cons:

***Nose and eye irritation is common, but usually disappears within one week.**

***Frequent use during the day required to obtain adequate nicotine levels**

Comments/limitations: Unlike nasal sprays used to relieve allergy symptoms, the nicotine spray is not meant to be sniffed. Rather, it is sprayed once into each nostril once or twice an hour. Take a deep breath, hold it, spray once into each nostril and exhale through the mouth.

Ask your pharmacist for help in using the product correctly.

Nicotine Inhaler

Nicotrol® Inhaler (prescription required)

A plastic cylinder containing a cartridge that delivers nicotine when you puff on it. Although similar in appearance to a cigarette, the inhaler delivers nicotine into the mouth, not the lung, and enters the body much more slowly than the nicotine in cigarettes.

Pros:

***Flexible dosing**

***Mimics the hand-to-mouth behavior of smoking**

***Few side effects**

***Faster delivery of nicotine than the patches**

Cons:

***Frequent use during the day required to obtain adequate nicotine levels**

***May cause mouth or throat irritation**

Comments/limitations: Puffing must be done frequently, far more often than your cigarette. Each cartridge lasts for 80 long puffs; each cartridge is designed for 20 minutes of use. A minimum of six cartridges per day is needed for three to six weeks, then the patient starts tapering off. You do not need to inhale deeply to achieve an effect. Small doses of nicotine provide a sensation in the back of the throat similar to cigarette smoke.

Non-nicotine medication

Zyban™ (bupropion hydrochloride)

Sustained-Release Tablets (prescription required)

Currently the only non-nicotine medication shown to be effective for quitting smoking. Treatment must be started at least one week before your target quit date.

Pros:

***Easy to use**

***Pill form**

***Few side effects**

***Can be used in combination with nicotine patches**

Cons:

***Should not be used by patients with eating disorders, seizure disorders or those taking certain other medications**

***Lack of flexibility of use**

Comments/limitations: This is the first medication to help quit smoking that is available in tablet form. Its primary role is to act on brain chemistry to bring about some of the same effects that nicotine has when people smoke. A small risk of seizure is associated with use of this medication. The main ingredient in Zyban has been available for many years as a treatment for depression under the trade name Wellbutrin. However, it works well in people with no depression as an aid to quit smoking.

Step#3: Staying Smoke-Free

Description & Examples

Pros & Cons

Preventing Relapse

The group program, individual counseling from a healthcare provider, telephone counseling or self-help materials you choose should include information on how to prevent a relapse and what to do if a relapse occurs.

Refer to [Step #1: Preparing to Quit](#)

Encouragement from Family and Friends

Pros:

- *Convenient/available
- *Understand you well and can anticipate your needs
- *Reinforce your desire to quit when you feel tempted to smoke again

Cons:

- *May become overly critical if your quit attempt fails
- *If they try to quit for you instead of for themselves, they may relapse and undermine your efforts

Worksite & Community

Many worksites and communities offer quit-smoking programs. These often include group programs such as those offered by the American Lung Association or support programs such as Nicotine Anonymous. Smoke-free worksite and community promotional campaigns may also include "buddy systems" and other activities to help people stay smoke-free.

Pros:

- *Helpful to have encouragement in the places—your job or community—where you spend most of your time
- *Helpful—and healthful—to work in smoke-free workplace

Cons:

- *Programs may not be available or may be hard to find in your area**
- *Worksite may not be smoke-free or may not encourage nonsmoking**

Telephone Encouragement or "Health Lines"

In addition to telephone counseling for developing a *Quit Smoking Action Plan*, many employers, HMOs, communities, and makers of nicotine and non-nicotine medications offer ongoing telephone counseling to encourage staying smoke-free.

Pros:

***Convenient**

***Private**

***Provide support when family and friends do not or cannot**

Cons:

***May not be available in your health plan, company, or community**