

How Can I Handle the Stress of Not Smoking?

No one says that quitting smoking is easy. But everyone says it's worth it! Quitting will drastically reduce your risk of developing heart and blood vessel diseases — diseases that kill someone every 34 seconds. It will also lower your chance of having lung disease and cancer. Most of all, quitting can save your life and the lives of nonsmokers around you.

No matter how much or how long you've smoked, when you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop. In time your risk will be about the same as if you'd never smoked!



How can I cope with the urge?

- Write down the reasons why you quit and look at the list often.
- Don't talk yourself into smoking again. When you feel an urge to have "just one," stop yourself. Think of what triggered you, and find a different way to handle it. For example, if you feel nervous and think you need a cigarette, realize that you could take a walk to calm down instead.
- Be prepared for times when you'll get the urge. If you smoke when drinking, cut down on alcohol so you don't weaken your promise to yourself.
- Change your habits. Instead of having a cigarette after dinner, brush your teeth or walk the dog.
- Go where smoking isn't allowed. In restaurants ask to be seated in the nonsmoking section.
- Stick around people who don't smoke. Ask for support and find a buddy you can call when you feel weak. Tell others they can help you by not giving you a cigarette and by being supportive.
- Reward yourself each time you get through a day or week without smoking. Treat yourself to a movie. Or figure out how much money you've saved and buy yourself something special.

How can I relax?

- Try deep breathing. Take a long, deep breath, count to 10 and release it. Repeat five times and you'll feel much more relaxed.
- Allow 20 minutes a day to let go of tension this way: Close your eyes, relax your muscles and think hard about one word, like "calm." Say it until you reach a state of relaxation.
- Think positive thoughts! Focus on how great it is that you've stopped smoking, how food tastes better and how nice it is not to wake up coughing. Remind yourself how smoking stinks, stains your teeth and gives you bad breath.
- Listen to relaxation audiotapes.

How can exercise help?

- Walking and other exercise releases stress and calms you.
- It can improve your mood.
- It keeps your mind off cigarettes.
- It can help control your appetite.
- It can help you lose weight if you're overweight, or stay at a normal weight.
- It can lower your blood pressure level.
- It can lower your "bad" blood lipid level.
- It can help reduce your risk of developing heart disease and stroke.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.
3. For more information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at StrokeAssociation.org.

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

How long will the cravings last? _____

What about nicotine gum? _____

What about the nicotine patch? _____