



# Smoking: Preparing to Quit

## *Part Two*

### Starting Steps

Just thinking about quitting may make you anxious, but your chances will be better if you get ready first. Quitting works best when you're prepared. Before you quit, start by taking these five important steps:

- **S** = Set a quit date.
- **T** = Tell family, friends and co-workers that you plan to quit.
- **A** = Anticipate and plan for the challenges you'll face while quitting.
- **R** = Remove cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home, car and work.
- **T** = Talk to your doctor about getting help to quit.

### Set a Date

Pick a date within the next two weeks to quit. That gives you enough time to get ready, but not so long that you will lose your motivation to quit. Think about choosing a special day, such as your birthday, anniversary, New Year's Day, World No Tobacco Day, Great American Smokeout Day, etc. If you smoke at work, quit on the weekend or during a day off. That way you'll already be smoke-free when you return.

### Share Your Plans

Quitting is easier with the support of others, such as family, friends and co-workers. Tell them how they can help you. Some people prefer constant support; others

find it offensive. Tell the people you care about exactly how they can help, for example:

- Ask them to understand your mood may change. Remind them it won't last long. The worst will be over within two weeks. Explain to them that the longer you go without cigarettes, the sooner you'll be your old self.
- If someone close to you smokes, ask them to quit with you, or at least not smoke around you.
- If you are on any medications tell your doctor and pharmacist you are quitting. Nicotine changes how some drugs work. You may need to change your prescriptions after you quit.
- Seek support from others. Try talking with others one-on-one or in a group setting. The more support you get, the better. Even a little can help.

### Anticipate and Plan for Challenges

Expecting challenges is an important part of preparing to quit. Most former smokers who start again do so within three months after quitting. The first three months may be difficult, as you may be more tempted when you are stressed or feeling down. It can be challenging to prepare for these moments before they occur, but it can help if you are familiar

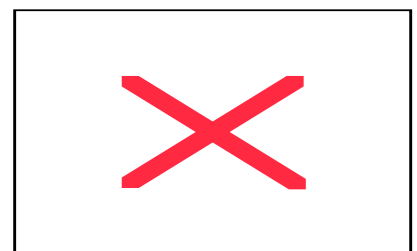
with what triggers your urge to smoke and plan ahead on how you will resist these urges. Also, realize that you will be experiencing symptoms of withdrawal as a result of giving up nicotine. This is normal and the discomfort is your body's way of telling you it's learning to be smoke-free. These symptoms will pass in time.

### Discuss Your Plan with Your Doctor

Quitting cold turkey isn't your only choice. Talk to your doctor about your other options, such as medications designed to help with withdrawal symptoms. For some of these medications you'll need a prescription, while others are available over-the-counter. Your doctor, dentist or pharmacist can also direct you to other sources of support.

### Withdrawal Medications

When you first quit smoking, you may feel strange, dull, tense or just not like yourself. These are signs your body is getting used to life without



nicotine, and usually only lasts a few weeks. It is not uncommon for smokers to simply not be able to handle how they feel after quitting, so they start smoking again to feel better. Most people slip up in the first week after quitting, when feelings of withdrawal are strongest. At this point nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) may be helpful, such as:

- Nicotine gum, patches, inhalers, sprays and lozenges, which can be used to help withdrawal symptoms and lessen the urge to smoke.
  - NRT therapy essentially replaces the nicotine you are no longer getting from your cigarettes, to help you physically cope with withdrawal symptoms. In fact, using these medications can double your chances of quitting for good.
  - Be sure to ask your doctor for advice before starting any of these medications. You will need a prescription to buy NRT inhalers and nasal sprays, but gum, patches and lozenges are sold over-the-counter.
- There are several medications used in smoking cessation efforts. They are medicines in pill form that don't have nicotine, but are available by prescription only. They are known to help lessen withdrawal symptoms and lessen the urge to smoke. However, some people have side effects when using these drugs, including dry mouth,

restlessness and insomnia. These medications should not be taken if you are pregnant, have a seizure disorder, have an eating disorder or drink heavily. Make sure to take drugs as prescribed and discuss any concerns with your doctor, dentist or pharmacist.

#### **Tips for Using NRT**

- Be patient. Using NRT correctly can take some getting used to. Follow the instructions and give it some time.
- Do not mix tobacco and NRT. Having one or two cigarettes while you use the gum, patch, nasal spray, inhaler or lozenge is not dangerous, but your goal is to quit smoking for good. Use NRT only when you are ready to stop smoking. If you do slip up and smoke a cigarette or two, don't give up on NRT. Keep trying.
- Start out using enough medicine. Use the full amount of NRT in the instructions. Do not skip or forget to use your NRT after you first stop smoking.
- Slowly taper off your NRT. Do not stop completely until you are ready. Your doctor or pharmacist can help you set up an appropriate schedule.
- Keep some of the medicine with you after you stop using it. This way you'll be ready for an emergency.
- Wait half an hour after using NRT gum, lozenges or inhalers before you eat or drink anything acidic. Acidic foods and drinks can keep

nicotine gums and inhalers from working. Acidic foods and drinks include tomato sauce, tomatoes, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, coffee, soda, orange juice and grapefruit juice.

- Read the instructions that come with your NRT. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.
- Remember that medicine alone can't do all the work. It can help with cravings and withdrawal, but quitting will still be hard at times.

#### **Benefits of a Quitting Program**

You may want to try a smoking cessation program or support group to help you quit. These programs can work great if you are willing to commit to them. They help smokers spot and cope with problems they experience when trying to quit by teaching problem-solving and coping skills. A smoking cessation program can help you quit for good by:

- Helping you better understand why you smoke
  - Teaching you how to handle withdrawal and stress
  - Teaching you tips to help resist the urge to smoke.
- Remember, patience and willpower are the keys to your success.

## **Did You Know...?**

Despite the fact that nicotine is very addicting, millions of people have quit smoking. You can succeed, even if it takes many tries. Nearly half of the people in the United States who ever smoked have now quit.