

A Tobacco-Free Future



Quitting tobacco is one of the most important steps you can take to improve your health.

You are not alone in your desire stop smoking. There are many resources and proven methods that can help you in your journey to quit.

This guide describes:

Health benefits of quitting smoking

Health risks of vaping and other e-cigarettes

Steps to take on your journey to be smoke-free

Resources to help you quit

Health benefits of quitting smoking

Improves your overall health. This can help add as much as 10 years to your life.

Improves your lung function. Breathing and moving gets easier.

Lowers your risk of some diseases and many types of cancer.

Lowers your risk of having chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) which makes it hard to breathe. If you already have COPD, quitting smoking can slow the progress of the disease.

Helps you have a healthier pregnancy.

Health risks of vaping and other e-cigarettes

Vaping and e-cigarettes are **not** good substitutes if you stop smoking traditional cigarettes.

E-cigarettes have chemicals like formaldehyde and acrolein (weed killer) which are proven to cause cancer and irreversible lung damage.

E-cigarettes have very high levels of nicotine which can cause damage to a teen or young adult's developing brain. It can lead to smoking traditional cigarettes as an adult.

Smoking and e-cigarettes increase your risk of illness such as the flu or a cold.



Steps to take on your journey to be smoke-free

Write down your reasons why you want to quit. Be specific. Think about the physical, psychological and financial benefits of quitting smoking.

Identify your triggers and learn how to cope with them. These can be the people, places, things, moods and behaviors that trigger you wanting to smoke.



Identify coping strategies. Try self-care activities like meditation, exercise, hobbies, journaling, getting enough sleep, and develop other healthy coping strategies that work for you.

Stay away from high-risk situations. These can be being around people who smoke or use tobacco, or drinking alcohol or caffeine.

Plan ahead for cravings. Cravings usually pass in 3 to 5 minutes. Having something on hand can help you get through the craving. Create a “survival kit” filled with things to do instead of smoking. Some examples include nicotine gum or lozenges, a straw, a toothpick, toothbrush and toothpaste, or fidget toy.

Identify support. Tell friends and family about your plan to quit smoking. Let them know how they can best support you.

Talk with your physician to see if taking a medication to stop smoking, also known as nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), is right for you. Nicotine, the addictive drug in tobacco (including e-cigarettes and vaping devices) makes it hard to quit.

Withdrawal symptoms can include:

- Hunger
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Irritation
- Trouble concentrating
- Anxiety

NRT medications can double your chance for success at quitting.

Talk with your physician about lung cancer screening. You may qualify for a lung cancer screening if you meet all of these criteria:

- You are between the ages of 50 and 80.
- You have at least a 20 “pack-year” history of smoking.
 - 1 pack-year is equal to smoking an average of 1 pack (or 20 cigarettes) every day for 1 year.
 - Example: If someone smokes 1 pack every day for 20 years or smokes 2 packs a day for 10 years, both equal 20 pack-years.

You need a physician’s order for screening. If you do not have a primary care physician, call 844.344.6663 (TTY: 711) to schedule a visit.

Resources to help you quit tobacco

Tobacco use is hard to overcome. Here are some resources to help you on your journey to be smoke- and tobacco-free.

Courage to Quit Class

Northwestern Medicine offers this live, virtual smoking cessation class at no cost. Get support, education and information about:

- Addiction
- Withdrawal
- Medications
- Cravings
- Avoiding triggers
- Creating a plan to help you quit smoking



To register for this class, call 877.926.4664 or go to [classes.nm.org](https://www.northwestern.edu/classes) and search for "smoking".

You can also scan the QR code with your smartphone.

Illinois Tobacco Quitline

Speak with a professional quit smoking coach who will help you create a plan that can work for you. Your coach can also help you get medications to quit smoking.

Call 866.QUIT.YES (866.784.8937) or go to [quityes.org](https://www.quityes.org)

Nicotine Anonymous

Join an in-person or online support group to help you stay tobacco-free.

Go to [nicotine-anonymous.org/find-a-meeting](https://www.nicotine-anonymous.org/find-a-meeting)

American Lung Association Freedom From Smoking® Lung Helpline

Certified counselors from the American Lung Association can help you decide if you are ready to quit and the best options for you.

Go to [freedomfromsmoking.org/lung-helpline](https://www.freedomfromsmoking.org/lung-helpline)

Smokefree.gov

This site has tools and tips to learn about ways to help you quit and how to use them. It includes smoke free apps and social media sites.

Go to [smokefree.gov](https://www.smokefree.gov)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Learn more about strategies for quitting and reasons to quit.

Go to [cdc.gov/quit](https://www.cdc.gov/quit) or call 1.800.QUITNOW (1.800.784.8669)

To get support over the phone through messaging support services, text QUITNOW to 333888

