

# Options for quitting smoking

## Why is it hard to quit smoking?

**IT'S PHYSICALLY ADDICTIVE.** The tobacco in cigarettes, pipes and cigars contains nicotine. Nicotine is an addictive drug that can change the way you think, act and feel. If you smoke you will become addicted to the “buzz” or “high” it gives you. Over time, you will have to smoke more and more to achieve the same feeling. Studies show that nicotine is as addictive as heroin or cocaine.

**IT'S A LEARNED BEHAVIOUR.** Maybe you've become accustomed to smoking when you are with certain people, or in certain places or situations. You may find it hard to avoid smoking during certain activities; for example, first thing in the morning, when you're in the car, around mealtimes, at a bar, or when you're bored. The good news is that any learned behaviour can be unlearned. You can successfully quit.

### Titles in this series

*Nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs)*  
*Options for quitting smoking*  
*Second-hand smoke (SHS)*  
*Smoking*  
*Smoking and pregnancy*  
*Social smoking*  
*Spit tobacco*  
*The tobacco industry*  
*What to expect when quitting smoking*

## What are my options for quitting?

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. Quitting smoking is also a tough thing to do. But if you keep trying, you can successfully stop smoking.

### CUTTING BACK OR "COLD TURKEY"

Some smokers have successfully quit by gradually cutting back on the amount and frequency of their smoking. Others have quit cold turkey, without any aids or support. However, smokers who include organized, individually tailored programs in their plan to quit have a higher success rate than those who use self-quit methods alone.

There is a wide range of quitting options available in Alberta to help smokers quit.

**GROUP SUPPORT PROGRAMS** Many health agencies or local community groups can offer support and education through group programs (e.g., Nicotine Anonymous) at a variety of costs.

**INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING** Health professionals, such as doctors, nurses, dental hygienists, dentists, pharmacists or addictions counsellors, may offer helpful information and advice on quitting smoking through one-on-one counselling or through a referral to other resources.

### NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT)

Three forms of nicotine replacement therapy are available in Canada: nicotine chewing gum, the nicotine patch and the nicotine inhaler. When used correctly, NRTs increase

a smoker's chances of long-term cessation. For more information please see “Nicotine replacement therapies” in this series. If you want to include NRT as part of your quitting plan, talk to your doctor first. Your doctor can give you important information to help you decide whether NRTs are right for you.

**NICOTINE-FREE PILL (ZYBAN®)** Zyban is a prescription drug that can help smokers quit by reducing withdrawal symptoms and the urge to smoke. Unlike nicotine patches, gum or inhalers, Zyban does not contain nicotine. Medications like Zyban can have side-effects, which affect different people in different ways. Consult with your doctor to decide if Zyban is right for you.

**SELF-HELP** Resources such as books, videos, workbooks or web-based programs such as [albertaquits.ca](http://albertaquits.ca) with chat rooms and daily supportive e-mails can provide extra support and information for smokers trying to quit.

**ALTERNATIVE THERAPIES** Non-drug therapies include hypnosis, acupuncture and laser therapy. (Laser therapy is like acupuncture, but uses lasers instead of needles.) Alternative, non-drug therapies are popular and available in many areas of Alberta. The costs of alternative therapies often range in price and can be expensive. To date, few have been scientifically proven to increase a smoker's chances of quitting successfully.

## How to choose the best quitting options?

There is no one right way to quit smoking. The following information can guide you through the range of quitting options available in Alberta and help you to choose the combination that best fits you.

A good quality program for quitting smoking should

- encourage you to get support from your family, friends and doctor
- give you advice on how to cope with the physical, emotional and social aspects of quitting smoking
- offer advice on how to cope with stress, cravings and social pressures to smoke
- identify a “stages-of-change” process in quitting smoking
- have a good reputation
- be designed or led by qualified instructors or counsellors
- be reasonably priced or free of charge

Be skeptical of programs that

- promise immediate success or suggest that quitting smoking is easy
- involve high-pressure sales pitches (these programs are often profit-driven and blame the smoker for failing to quit, not the quality of the program)
- claim success rates greater than 40 per cent

## How can AADAC help me to quit smoking?

If you're a smoker living in Alberta, call AADAC's toll-free Smokers' Help Line at 1-866-33AADAC (1-866-332-2322). The Smokers' Help Line provides confidential and free information, referrals, telephone

counselling and support to smokers who want to quit. The line is an important part of the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Strategy. The Smokers' Help Line is available 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily.

## Want to know more?

For more information, contact your local AADAC office, call 1-866-33AADAC, or visit our website at [aadac.com](http://aadac.com)