

Quitting Smoking

Why quit smoking?

One in seven British Columbians is a smoker, and the majority of them want to quit.

There are many reasons to want to quit smoking. You may worry about the harmful effects of smoking on your health. In fact, tobacco kills almost 5,600 people each year in B.C. and causes illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, throat and oral cancer, and emphysema. You may also be concerned about the dangerous effects of second-hand smoke to people around you, especially children.

In addition to health benefits, you can save nearly \$3,000 the first year you quit, if you used to smoke a pack a day.

Methods to help you quit

When it comes to quitting smoking, willpower may not be enough. Making the right choices about how to quit are also important.

Different methods of quitting smoking work for different people. Learn what options are available and how well they work. Then you can decide which method, or combination of methods, is best for you.

Cold turkey: This is the term for quitting using willpower alone. This method works for some people, but many find it too difficult to maintain.

Medications to help with withdrawal:

Medications can double your chances of quitting. While it is normal to still get withdrawal symptoms, medications can reduce the intensity of those symptoms.

- *Nicotine replacement therapy* (the Patch, nicotine gum): These non-prescription medications contain nicotine. You can reduce the amount of nicotine gradually and handle withdrawal symptoms more easily.
- *Bupropion SR* (Zyban): This medicine reduces the urge to smoke for some people. It is not for everyone. Pregnant women, people who have seizures, people with eating disorders, and people who drink heavily should not use it. You can get this medication with a doctor's prescription.

Counselling: Speaking to a counsellor or someone who understands what you are going through can be helpful when you are trying to quit smoking. This can help you learn what to expect and how to cope effectively with situations where you would normally smoke.

BC residents can get free counselling and other assistance from QuitNow by Phone. Call QuitNow by Phone toll-free in BC 1-877-455-2233, available 24 hours every day. Translation services are available in 130 languages.

Hypnosis and acupuncture: Some people feel that hypnosis and acupuncture have helped them quit smoking, although there is no firm evidence that either method is effective.

How to get ready to quit

Planning in advance how you want to quit can make it more likely that you will succeed. Some of the things you should look at when preparing to quit are:

Stay motivated. To help you stay motivated, make a list of the reasons you want to be a non-smoker. The more personal the list, the better. Keep the list handy as a reminder.

Pick your quit day. Pick the day, in advance, when you want to quit. Try to pick a day that is no more than three weeks in advance so that you don't lose your motivation. Look for a time when you will have support, and no unusual stresses. Remember, there is no perfect time so pick your day to quit now.

Quit method. Choose the method(s) you are going to use to help you quit smoking.

Support. Most people find it helps to have people to talk to for support. Make a list of people and phone numbers.

Triggers. Think about what situations make you want to smoke, and plan how you will cope with each one.

Withdrawal. Learn what to expect, and how you can make it better. For example, irritability is a common withdrawal symptom, and deep breathing helps many people cope with this symptom.

It's always a good time to quit

Many people think that you won't see the benefits of quitting for years. The good news is that the health benefits of quitting smoking start the first day, with increased oxygen in the blood and lower blood pressure. Within one year of quitting, the risk of coronary heart disease decreases by half. Ten years after quitting, the risk of lung cancer is similar to someone who has never smoked.

If you are thinking of quitting, call QuitNow toll-free in BC at 1-877-455-2233 or visit www.quitnow.ca.



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Call the BC NurseLine to speak to a registered nurse, available 24-hours every day:

- In Greater Vancouver, call 604-215-4700
- In BC, call toll-free 1-866-215-4700
- Deaf and hearing-impaired, call 1-866-889-4700
- Pharmacist available 5pm to 9am every day
- Translation services in over 130 languages upon request.

Visit BC HealthGuide OnLine – a world of health information you can trust at www.bchealthguide.org