



# Staying a non-smoker



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# Congratulations on giving up smoking! Use this booklet to help you stay a non-smoker.

Now that you have stopped smoking you will be feeling healthier, and you will be breathing more easily. After a while you may also start to notice that you have more money to spend on other things.

## Benefits of quitting

The best thing smokers can do for their health is quit smoking. The health benefits of quitting occur for all smokers, regardless of age, sex, or length of time that they have been smoking.

There are many benefits of quitting. Some start within hours of stopping smoking. If you feel tempted to have a cigarette, or even 'just a puff', read the table below to help you remember the great benefits for your health if you stay a non-smoker.

### ► Time since quitting    ► Beneficial health changes that take place

<b>Within 20 minutes</b>	Your heart rate drops and your body begins a series of changes that continue for years.
<b>4 hours</b>	The nicotine level in your blood is halved.
<b>12 hours</b>	The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal and the oxygen level increases.
<b>1–2 days</b>	Nicotine by-products are removed from your blood.
<b>2–3 days</b>	Taste buds revive, and your ability to taste and smell improves.
<b>2–12 weeks</b>	Your heart attack risk begins to drop. Circulation improves. Exercise is easier and lung function improves.

► **Time since quitting**    ► **Beneficial health changes that take place**

<b>Within 3 months</b>	Coughing, sinus congestion and shortness of breath decrease.
<b>1 Year</b>	Your added risk of heart disease is reduced to half that of a smoker.
<b>5 years</b>	Your risk of cancer of the mouth and throat is halved and your risk of stroke is dramatically reduced.
<b>10 years</b>	Your risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker, and your risk of other cancers decreases.
<b>15 years</b>	Your risks of heart disease and death fall to about the same as those of someone who has never smoked.

**By quitting smoking you will reduce your chance of having:**

- Cancer of the lungs, throat, mouth, lips, gums, kidneys and bladder
- Heart disease and hardening of the arteries
- A stroke
- Emphysema and other lung diseases.

**Mental health**

Giving up smoking means:

- Feeling less stressed
- Reducing your chances of suffering from anxiety or depression in the long term
- If you are taking any medications for depression or schizophrenia you may experience fewer complications with these medications.

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## **Appearance, vision and ageing**

As a non-smoker, you are less likely to:

- Have brittle bones (that break easily)
- Get wrinkles and look older faster
- Have yellow teeth and bad breath.

## **Sexuality and pregnancy**

By quitting, you will reduce your chances of:

- Impotence
- Infertility
- Having premature (underdeveloped) and unhealthy babies, or miscarriage.

## **Children's health**

If you have children, your quitting can lower their risk of:

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Ear infections
- Allergies
- Asthma
- Bronchitis and other lung problems
- Being smokers themselves.



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## What are the other benefits of quitting?

Although reducing your risk of death and illness is very important, this isn't the only benefit of quitting smoking.

- Cigarettes will no longer control your life – you can now go places where smoking is banned.
- You will be able to save money by not having to buy tobacco, lighters, matches, etc.
- Your fitness will improve and exercising will be easier.
- Your senses of taste and smell will improve.
- You will have more energy to do things.
- You'll have a great feeling of achievement. Many smokers remember the exact day they quit because it is a source of great pride.
- Because you have quit smoking, others around you will benefit from less exposure to second-hand smoke.
- If you have children, you will be setting a great example for your kids.



## Slipping up

A lot of people try quitting several times before they finally quit for good. If you slip up, don't feel you are weak; just learn from the experience and go back to your quit plan.

You need to know your danger times and plan to avoid them for the first couple of weeks of quitting. Try to avoid going to places where you know people will be smoking.

If you are worried that you might start smoking again, speak to a nurse or doctor, or someone else you trust. You can also ring the Quitline on 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for advice and support.

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## Feeling down

People who stop smoking may experience a range of withdrawal symptoms, such as anger, sadness, restlessness, dizziness, headaches and difficulty sleeping. Some people have just a few of these symptoms, while others may have more difficulty. They are a normal part of stopping smoking.

The good news is that they will pass in time – a few days or weeks. Try to think of them as recovery symptoms – a sign that your body is getting better. Remember to take one day at a time, and to reward yourself.

For people with a mental illness or history of mental illness, withdrawal symptoms can sometimes be confused with symptoms of mental illness. Be sure to speak to your doctor if you have any concerns.

## Social pressure

If your friends or family are making quitting harder for you, let them know how you feel and ask them not to offer you cigarettes. In the early days of quitting, try to spend time with non-smoking friends and family. It can also help to practise saying, “No thanks, I’m a non-smoker”, or, “I don’t need cigarettes”.

This can help to build your confidence, and to be ready if someone offers you a cigarette.

## Quitting medications

If you are using nicotine patches, gum, or other products to help you quit, check with your health worker, doctor or pharmacist to make sure they are working properly and that you are getting the right dose. You can also ring the Quitline on 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for advice about this.

## Putting on weight

Sometimes when people give up smoking they gain a little weight. If you do put on a bit of weight, don’t worry about it for now – it’s better to focus on giving up smoking and deal with any weight gain later. A few extra kilos of weight are a smaller health risk than continuing to smoke.

You can keep your weight at a healthy level by getting plenty of exercise and eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.

## Your non-smoker checklist

**I'm a non-smoker now. The worst part of giving up is over.**

- ✓ I will find new ways to deal with stress.
- ✓ I will stay away from places that make me want to smoke.
- ✓ I will remind myself of my reasons for quitting whenever I feel angry or stressed.
- ✓ I will talk to a health worker if I am worried about putting on weight.
- ✓ I will speak to my doctor if I have any concerns about my mental health.
- ✓ I will reward myself for staying a non-smoker!



**For more information, see your health worker, nurse, doctor or caseworker about quitting. The Quitline can help you with information, and you can ring them on 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for the cost of a local call.**

### **Congratulations on becoming a non-smoker.**

- ▶ You are now benefiting from the immediate and long-term effects of quitting smoking.
- ▶ A lot of people try quitting several times before they finally quit for good.
- ▶ If you slip up, don't feel you are weak; just learn from it and go back to your quit plan.
- ▶ Practise saying, "No thanks, I'm a non-smoker", or, "I don't need cigarettes", to help build your confidence in case you are offered a cigarette.

### **Acknowledgements:**

Cancer Council NSW would like to thank staff from NSW Health for their assistance in producing this booklet.