



Supporting someone to quit smoking

The best thing smokers can do for their health is to quit smoking. Making the decision to quit is a big one. If you are supporting someone to quit it is important that it is that person's choice not yours. Pressure from a friend or family member can make it more difficult for someone to quit. On the other hand, supporting someone in a positive and non-judgmental way can be extremely helpful.

Understanding why people smoke

There are many reasons why people smoke. Smoking is often linked to certain feelings, habits, routines or situations. For example some people smoke to relieve stress, or cope with boredom or anxiety. For others, smoking is triggered when they drink coffee or alcohol, or when out they are out with friends.

Nicotine is the addictive substance in cigarettes. After inhaling tobacco smoke, nicotine reaches a specific part of the brain in about 10 seconds and causes the release of relaxing chemicals. This effect only lasts for a short time so that soon the person is craving another cigarette to top up the nicotine levels in their brain. People continue to smoke because they enjoy the temporary feeling of the relaxing chemicals.

Understanding why people want to quit

There are many reasons why people want to quit smoking. For some people smoking costs them too much money. It also impacts on their health, fitness and sense of wellbeing. Some smokers are concerned for their children and want to be around to see their children and grandchildren grow up.

Other smokers have been influenced by anti-smoking campaigns or friends and family members who have asked them to quit. Whatever the reasons for quitting, the important thing is that the smoker is the one who has made the decision to quit and is motivated to do so.

Understanding quitting

Becoming a non-smoker takes time. Many people make a number of quit attempts before they quit for good. Some people find it easy to quit while others find it more challenging. It is best to let people choose the ways that work for them. If one method doesn't work, then maybe something else will. For many people a combination of methods work best. Some people find that setting a quit date is helpful while others prefer the cut down to quit method.

With each quit attempt a person can learn more about how their body reacts to going without cigarettes and adjust to the social side of being a non-smoker. If someone you are supporting does slip up or return to smoking, continue to provide encouragement and highlight the positive learning that is gained from every quit attempt.

Remind them that the benefits gained as a non-smoker always outweigh the short-term difficulties of quitting.

Helping someone to get ready to quit smoking

Below are some things you might raise in conversation when supporting someone to quit:

- What do you like about smoking and what do you dislike about smoking?
- What are your main reasons for quitting?
- What you have learned from previous quit attempts?
- How you would prefer to be supported?
- How can I help to encourage you?
- How ready or confident do you feel about quitting?
- Have you thought about setting a quit date?
- What triggers your smoking and how might you deal with these?
- Have you set up smoke free zones, such as smoke-free house and car?
- Have you talked to your doctor about quitting and medications to help you quit?
- How are you handling cravings and withdrawal symptoms?
- Have you planned some rewards (short and longer term) for quitting?

You might mention one or two of these things from time to time. It is best to only talk about quitting when the smoker is OK about having this conversation with you.

Read the **Getting ready to quit smoking** fact sheet available on www.health.nsw.gov.au (Search: Getting ready to quit smoking), this may give you some more ideas.

Supporting someone with withdrawal and cravings

A person quitting smoking may go through nicotine withdrawal. Symptoms may include:

- depressed mood
- irritability, frustration
- insomnia
- anger, anxiety
- restlessness, difficulty concentrating
- increased appetite.

Many people find nicotine withdrawal is worst in the first 24 to 48 hours of quitting. Supporting someone through this period may mean giving space for the person to be a bit grumpy, restless or irritable. Try thinking of nicotine withdrawal symptoms as 'recovery symptoms'. After about two weeks, recovery symptoms are usually less severe.

Cravings are a normal part of quitting. They tend to last no more than a few minutes. Some people will experience a series of cravings and this can be very challenging.

Some people find it useful to take one craving at a time, one day at a time. As time passes, cravings will usually be less strong, be shorter and happen less often.

Talking with **Quitline 13 7848** can help with ideas to manage withdrawal symptoms and cravings.

Read the **Getting ready to quit smoking** fact sheet available on www.health.nsw.gov.au (Search: Getting ready to quit smoking) has more information.

Supporting a smoker to limit alcohol and caffeine

A person quitting smoking is advised to avoid or limit alcohol during the first few weeks of quitting. For many smokers it is common to combine drinking alcohol with smoking, so having a drink with friends who smoke may trigger cravings.

Instead of meeting for a beer or a glass of wine you could suggest alternatives such as going for a walk, visiting friends who don't smoke, going to a movie or a concert or an outing to another smoke-free place (for example, swimming pool or bowling alley).

Caffeine has a stronger effect when a person stops smoking, so it is a good idea to halve the usual amount of coffee, tea, cola and energy drinks consumed after quitting.

Higher caffeine levels for someone who has quit can make them feel restless, anxious or make sleeping more difficult – all symptoms they may incorrectly put down to quitting when in fact it is due to the effects of a high caffeine intake.

Remember, it's never too late to quit smoking.

If you or someone you know would like to quit smoking contact the Quitline 13 7848 (13 QUIT) or speak with your health professional.

For further ideas on how to support someone to quit smoking visit the websites: www.icanquit.com.au and www.quitnow.gov.au