



Happy New Life! Go Tobacco Free in 2010!

Nearly everyone who smokes already knows that tobacco is bad for their health. That doesn't make it any easier to stop. Tobacco is addictive. Some clinicians believe that tobacco is as hard to quit as alcohol, cocaine, or heroin. In spite of that, over one million New Yorkers successfully quit tobacco every year!



Don't be discouraged if you have tried to quit smoking in the past and been unsuccessful. Most former smokers have to try quitting several times before they finally succeed. Perseverance pays off.

There are many ways to quit. Some smokers go "cold turkey". Others gradually cut down. Some use nicotine replacement products. Others use prescription drugs. Some use a combination of both. There is no "right way". Generally a combination of approaches works best for most people.

Many find planning ahead to be really helpful. They set a quit date. They may see their doctor to get a prescription for medication. They think about what "personal triggers" they have that lead to lighting up, and make plans to substitute other actions. For example, those who always light up over their first cup of coffee may wait to drink that coffee at work where smoking is prohibited.

Another planning strategy that helps is to clean out the smoke smell from your home and your car. Removing all ash trays and cigarettes from home, car, and work helps eliminate a major trigger. Lining up support from family, friends, and co-workers can really make a difference, too.

Because nicotine is addictive, using medication and /or nicotine replacement as part of your quit plan can improve your chances of quitting. There are two non-nicotine medications commonly used. Both of them work on brain chemistry, and both have side effects in some people, but either can be very helpful for many people.

- **Zyban** is a drug that works on the pleasure centers in the brain and can reduce the craving for cigarettes.
- **Chantix** is a drug that binds to the nicotine receptors in the brain. This keeps the nicotine from binding there, and blocks the pleasure you get from smoking. Among those who take it for a full 12 weeks, about 44% succeed in quitting. That is a much higher rate than is seen from other medical interventions.



There are also several nicotine replacement drugs, some of which are over-the-counter.

- The nicotine patch comes in several strengths. The body absorbs enough nicotine from the patch to take the edge off withdrawal symptoms.
- Nicotine lozenges and gum work in a similar way to the patch.



- Nicotine nasal sprays and inhalers also replace nicotine, but these newer products require a prescription.

Talk to your doctor to see which of these options might be best for you. They may recommend a combination of them, with or without counseling or a support group. Given the high personal cost in health outcomes, it is worth doing whatever it takes to succeed in quitting.

It takes a while after you have quit to lose the craving. For some, the desire to light up again can last for six months or more. That's where your plan comes in handy. Suck on mints, chew toothpicks, walk the dog...do whatever you have to do to get through the cravings. They almost never last longer than ten minutes, so even though it is hard, it is "doable".



What benefits will you reap? Your heart rate will drop. The level of carbon monoxide in your blood drops, too. Blood circulation gets better, and both your heart and your lungs get healthier. The benefits go on and on.

Make 2010 the year that gives you new life! Start your plan to quit smoking today! Believe it or not, your body will be healthier by tomorrow!

For more information, support and helpful materials, see www.NYQUITS.com or visit Web MD at <http://www.webmd.com/smoking-cessation/default.htm> or the Mayo Clinic at <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/quit-smoking/MY00433/tab=InDepth>.