

Smoking Cessation

Health benefits begin soon after you smoke your last cigarette:

- Within 20 minutes, your blood pressure drops.
- Within 8 hours, carbon monoxide levels in your blood drop to normal.
- At 24 hours, your risk of a heart attack begins to fall.
- At 2 weeks to 9 months, you can breathe easier as you can get more air into your lungs.
- At 1 year, your risk of heart disease and stroke from smoking drops by 50%.
- At 5 years, your risk of stroke is the same as a non-smoker.
- At 10 years, your risk of dying from lung cancer reduces significantly.
- At 15 years, your risk of heart disease equals that of a non-smoker.

What can you do to quit smoking?

Even though quitting smoking will improve your health, it can be hard to stop. Speak with your primary care provider to discuss the best options for you. Nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs), medicines, and counselling are available to make quitting easier.

- **Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs):** NRTs are available over-the-counter as skin patches, chewing gum, nasal sprays, inhalers, and lozenges. NRTs contain less nicotine than cigarettes. They can help lessen nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms.
- **Medicines:** Bupropion (brand name Zyban) and varenicline (brand name Champix) are prescription pills that do not contain nicotine, but have been shown to help people quit smoking. Both of these medicines should be started a week or two before you try to quit. There is also a natural health product called cytosine that is an option to help you quit smoking.

What are some of the side effects of quitting?

Your body gets used to the effects of nicotine, so you will experience withdrawal when you no longer smoke. Symptoms of withdrawal are different for different people, and may include feeling irritable, nervous, jittery, or sleepy. You may have trouble concentrating or feel more hungry than usual. These symptoms are usually worst during the first week after you quit, but it is important to understand that they may last up to a month or longer. Talk with your primary care provider about ways you can manage these symptoms.

Online resources

- The Canadian Cancer Society: www.smokershelpline.ca
 - Information for smokers, quit plans, tips for those not ready to quit, information for young adults and a free app (Break it Off – breakitoff.ca).
- Quit Now: www.quitnow.ca
 - Information on calculating the cost of smoking, the effects of smoking on the body, online forum, coaching, etc.
- Leave the Pack Behind: www.leavethepackbehind.org
 - Personalized support and quitting resources for young adults aged 18-29 in Ontario.
- Health Canada Website: www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/smoking-tobacco.html
 - A guide to becoming a non-smoker, 5 stages of quitting, a cost calculator for amount spent on smoking, and resources for youth (Quit4Life).

