
Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Tobacco Cessation: How to Change?

To effectively change your tobacco use, consider all of the factors that contribute to using tobacco. It can be helpful to group these factors into three main categories: physical factors, habits, and psychological factors (i.e., your thoughts and emotions).

Physically, nicotine is the most addictive substance on the planet. Your medical provider will tell you whether it is appropriate for you to use a nicotine replacement product, such as the patch or gum. Some medications, like Zyban, are very helpful to some people but don't seem to help other people with their nicotine cravings. Sometimes, using two of these products together can help relieve cravings and withdrawal symptoms better. It is best to work closely with your Primary Care Provider (PCP) to choose the best medication or combination of medications which may be right for you. These products have been proven to help people quit and are often key to success. People who use medication have much higher rates of success in quitting.

Behaviorally, you will need to change your habits and the situations that you typically associate with tobacco. Undoubtedly, you will experience situations that cause you to crave tobacco, but you can learn skills that will help you choose alternatives other than using tobacco. Practical counseling and support are available to help you through this process. This counseling can help you recognize situations that tempt you to use tobacco, problem-solve and develop skills to cope with these situations. Even brief counseling greatly increases the success of a quit attempt. In addition to services in primary care, VA offers tobacco cessation groups and/or individual counseling through tobacco cessation clinics. Also, if you would find telephone counseling supportive, you can call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) to get connected to your state telephone quit line.

Thoughts and emotions are some of the hardest aspects of tobacco use to change. Often, individuals think that they need tobacco to get through a difficult situation. Changing these thoughts to cope with stress and negative emotions is an essential aspect of successful tobacco cessation. One helpful strategy is to list your top 3 reasons for quitting, and remind yourself of them as a way to stay strong if you need a boost along the way. Take a moment to list your main reasons for quitting:

1. _____
2. _____

3. _____

Preparing to Quit

Your Quit Date

When is the last day and time that you are going to use tobacco?

Month _____ Day _____ Year _____ Time _____

Preparing Your Surroundings

What are the things that remind you to use tobacco? It is important to change your surroundings so that you won't be reminded about tobacco use as frequently. Before your quit date consider the following:

- Don't buy tobacco in bulk (e.g., don't buy cartons).
- Find all of your hidden stashes of tobacco. Check in the couch, the glove compartment, in your drawers at home and at work. It is unwise to keep an emergency stash once you quit.
- Get rid of tobacco-related materials—things like ashtrays and lighters. You may need lighters for candles or fireplaces, but you likely don't need to carry lighters wherever you go.
- Prepare family and friends. Let them know that you are planning to quit and ask for their help. If you have friends and family who do use tobacco, ask them to avoid using tobacco around you.
- Prepare and develop a plan for coping with cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Use the combination of strategies that works for you.
- Choose a method to quit. There are several ways to consider quitting, but one of the most important considerations is to avoid thinking favorably about your last tobacco use. If you remember your tobacco fondly, then you may be more likely to go back to tobacco use when you perceive that you need it.

Quitting is difficult and many people find it to be challenging. Preparing for difficult situations as you quit can help you succeed. What do you expect to be the most difficult challenge for you as you quit? Will it be going without a cigarette with your morning coffee? Will it be not smoking when your spouse or friends light up? Anticipating and having a plan for how to handle these challenges will increase your success.

As you prepare to quit there are other things in your life that you can do a little bit differently that will help you to be successful. For example, there may be places you should avoid or things you should do differently. What situations (e.g., bars, sporting events, smoking areas) do you need to **avoid** during the next month to limit your urges to use tobacco? How can you change situations that you can't avoid so that you'll be more

successful with your quit attempt **{Alter}**? "When you feel the urge to put tobacco in your mouth what could you use instead" (e.g., gum, hard candies or mints, toothpicks, cinnamon sticks) **{Alternatives}**? "Are there **Activities** (e.g., going for a walk) you can do or ways to keep you busy if you feel an urge to use tobacco?"

Using the Four A's to Outsmart Tobacco Urges

Avoid. What are the situations or places that you need to avoid over the next month?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Alter. What situations will you need to change to help you be more successful?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Alternatives. What can you put in your mouth or hands instead of using tobacco?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Action. When you get an urge to use tobacco, what can you do to be active or busy?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Follow-Up Appointment Plan:

Adapted from: Hunter, C.L., Goodie, J.L., Oordt, M.S., & Dobmeyer, A.C. (2009). *Integrated Behavioral Health in Primary Care: Step-by-step Guidance for Assessment and Intervention*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.