

Advice For Smokers

It is now well known that smoking has a damaging effect on almost every system of the body, and is the largest single cause of death and disability in the UK and Ireland. It has a number of adverse effects on oral health too, including being a major cause of oral cancer and periodontal (gum) disease. Smoking stains and damages the teeth, as well as affecting your sense of taste and causing bad breath (halitosis).

As one of the strongest addictions, most smokers will need some help in giving up. If at first you don't succeed, and relapse into smoking, don't despair. Many smokers will make several unsuccessful attempts before they finally quit. A range of options are available to give your willpower a boost.

Advice

Your doctor or pharmacist will be able to advise you on ways of cutting down your smoking, and provide helpful tips on stopping for good. After your initial consultation, you will probably need follow-up advice to help you maintain your good intentions – research has shown that success rates are more than twice as high if follow-up contact is made.

Steps To Giving Up

What works for one person may not work for another. Some of the points below could help you, including:

- * Make a list of all the reasons why you want to give up smoking. Keep this list
- * Look back at previous quitting attempts – what worked and what did not ?
- * Plan ahead to identify future problems and how to deal with them
- * Set a date to stop and stop completely on that day
- * Tell your family and friends and enlist their support
- * Keep a smoking diary for a few days prior to giving up – this will give you useful guidance about when your craving for a cigarette may be highest
- * Plan for your first day as a 'non-smoker' – throw away all your cigarettes, ashtrays, lighters and decide how you are going to spend the day
- * Take one day at a time. Make your goal to get through 'today' without smoking
- * Try nicotine replacement therapy (see below)
- * Don't be tempted to have 'just the one' cigarette. It could be the start of a slippery slope
- * If you feel your resolve slipping, get out your list of reasons for giving up
- * Call Stop Smoking Quitline for free support and advice UK 0800 002200

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

NRT has been shown to roughly double the success rate of quitting. It is safe, non-addictive, in most cases, and costs around the same as smoking. The type of NRT chosen is down to personal preference:

- * The NRT Skin Patch – releases low doses of nicotine slowly throughout the time it is in place, preventing the highs and lows of craving and satisfaction. It comes in a range of strengths and is convenient to wear, although it can cause skin irritation in some patients
- * Nicotine Gum – comes in 2 doses and a range of flavours. It provides instant nicotine, which is absorbed through the mouth.
- * Nasal Spray – Nicotine is absorbed rapidly through the nose and is helpful for heavy smokers, though it can be hard to get used to
- * Nicotine Inhaler – This is a plastic mouthpiece with nicotine cartridges, which the smoker draws on like a cigarette
- * Nicotine Tablets – These are placed under the tongue where they dissolve to release nicotine

Giving up smoking is not easy, but the benefits start to take effect immediately, and last a lifetime. It is never too late to stop: regardless of age at which you quit, stopping smoking will prolong your life.