

Smoking Cessation

The benefits of stopping smoking start the moment you stop:

- **20 minutes**
Blood pressure and pulse return to normal
- **1 hour**
Your circulation improves. Your hands and feet begin to feel warmer.
- **8 hours**
Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels fall. Oxygen in your body returns to normal.
- **1 day**
Your lungs begin to work better. Carbon monoxide removed from your body.
- **2 days**
Taste and smell improve. Nicotine is removed from your body.
- **3 days**
Breathing becomes easier. Your energy levels increase.
- **2 weeks**
Withdrawal symptoms begin to ease. Walking and daily tasks become easier to do.
- **1 month**
Withdrawal symptoms have stopped. Your breathing and energy levels continue to improve.
- **6 months**
Your risk of heart attack, cancer and other smoking related diseases begins to fall

Tips on giving up smoking

Write a list of the reasons why you want to stop, and keep them with you. Refer to them when tempted to light up. You may wish to read a separate leaflet in this series called 'Smoking - The Facts'. This gives the reasons why smoking is so harmful and lists the benefits of stopping.

Set a date for stopping, and stop completely. (Some people prefer the idea of cutting down gradually. However, research has shown that if you smoke less cigarettes than usual, you are likely to smoke more of each cigarette, and nicotine levels remain nearly the same. Therefore, it is usually best to stop once and for all from a set date.)

Tell everyone that you are giving up smoking. Friends and family often give support and may help you. Smoking by others in the household makes giving up harder. If appropriate, try to get other household members who smoke, or friends who smoke, to stop smoking at the same time. A 'team' effort may be easier than going it alone.

Get rid of ashtrays, lighters, and all cigarettes.

Be prepared for some withdrawal symptoms. When you stop smoking, you are likely to get symptoms which may include: nausea (feeling sick), headaches, anxiety, irritability, craving, and just feeling awful. These symptoms are caused by the lack of nicotine that your body has been used to. They tend to peak after 12-24 hours, and then gradually ease over 2-4 weeks.

Anticipate a cough. It is normal for a 'smokers cough' to get worse when you stop smoking (as the airways 'come back to life'). Many people say that this makes them feel worse for a while after stopping smoking and makes them tempted to restart smoking. Resist this temptation! The cough usually gradually eases.

Be aware of situations in which you are most likely to want to smoke. In particular, drinking alcohol is often associated with failing in an attempt to stop smoking. You should consider not drinking much alcohol in the first few weeks after stopping smoking. Try changing your routine for the first few weeks. For example, don't go to the pub for a while if that is a tempting place to smoke and drink alcohol. Also, if drinking tea and coffee are difficult times, try drinking mainly fruit juice and plenty of water instead.

Take one day at a time. Mark off each successful day on a calendar. Look at it when you feel tempted to smoke, and tell yourself that you don't want to start all over again.

Be positive. You can tell people that you don't smoke. You will smell better. After a few weeks you should feel better, taste your food more, and cough less. You will have more money. Perhaps put away the money you would have spent on cigarettes for treats.

Food. Some people worry about gaining weight when they give up smoking as the appetite may improve. Anticipate an increase in appetite, and try not to increase fatty or sugary foods as snacks. Try sugar-free gum and fruit instead.

Don't despair if you fail. Examine the reasons why you felt it was more difficult at that particular time. It will make you stronger next time. On average, people who eventually stop smoking have made 3 or 4 previous attempts.

Medication. Stopping smoking takes willpower but you will increase your chances of giving up by 5 times if you take medication. These include Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) which comes as gums, sprays, patches, tablets, lozenges, and inhalers. Also, medicines called bupropion (trade name 'Zyban') and varenicline (trade name 'Champix') can help. Please make an appointment with a doctor or smoking cessation clinic at the surgery. In addition, you will increase your chances further through smoking cessation counselling. The all Wales smoking cessation helpline can be contacted on 0800 085 2219