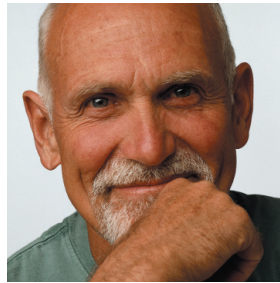




FOREVER  
*FREE*™

A Guide  
To Remaining  
Smoke Free



An Overview

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*Congratulations on quitting smoking! You have taken one of the most important health steps that a person can take. The fact that you asked for Forever Free information means that you want to stay tobacco-free. That commitment along with the Forever Free information should increase your chance of success!*

## About Forever Free

The goal of the *Forever Free* program is to help ex-smokers stay off cigarettes. Every year 17 million Americans try to quit smoking, but only 1.3 million of these smokers are able to stay off cigarettes. That means that over 90% of smokers who try to quit cannot stay tobacco-free.

As you may have seen, there are many efforts to help people to quit smoking. Stop smoking ads appear on TV and radio, in newspapers and magazines, and on billboards. More and more places (restaurants, hospitals, work places, sports places) do not allow smoking. The problem with all these efforts is that they just tell smokers to quit. They do not tell them **how** to do it.

In the last ten years, much research has been done to find out why some people can stay off cigarettes for good, while others go back to smoking. This research has been used to develop programs to help ex-smokers stay off cigarettes for good. This type of program is called "relapse prevention."

The information in this *Forever Free* packet is based on research on smoking relapse done by researchers at TRIP and other places. The *Forever Free* program is brand new, so this packet is "hot off the press." The *Forever Free* program is funded by a grant from the National Cancer Institute. We hope to expand and develop the *Forever Free* program to include other services that may be helpful to ex-smokers, like yourself.

We ask that you read the *Forever Free* book and then save it. Some of the information may be a review for you; other information may be new. We ask that you read the book from time to time. In this way, you will be prepared if you have an urge to smoke.

# Seven Facts About Smoking and Quitting

## Fact 1: Nicotine is addicting.

We now know that most smokers are physically addicted to nicotine. If you smoked a half a pack or more per day, chances are that you were addicted to nicotine. This means that your body tried to get used to having nicotine in it. Your body became used to the effects of nicotine, and as this happened, you slowly smoked more and more. Also, when you stopped smoking, your body had to get used to not having nicotine in it. This often feels bad. It is called **nicotine withdrawal**. Common withdrawal feelings that you may have felt when you quit were:



- lightheadedness
- headache
- sleep problems
- nausea (sick to your stomach)
- decreased heart rate
- depression (feeling sad)
- craving for cigarettes
- irritability
- increased appetite
- anxiety (feeling tense)
- difficulty thinking
- constipation

As your body gets used to having no nicotine, these feelings do go away, so that after a week or so of not smoking most of the feelings have stopped. Having cigarettes—even one—during this time only makes withdrawal longer and harder.

Physical addiction, like nicotine withdrawal, is an important reason that many smokers have trouble quitting. Withdrawal does not feel good. Smoking a cigarette may help, but only for a short time. Thus, it is very tempting to smoke to reduce withdrawal feelings. Some smokers say that they enjoy the taste of a cigarette. Although the taste of cigarettes does vary based on the cigarette brand, studies show that when nicotine is taken out of cigarettes, smokers no longer like the **taste**. So even taste is related to nicotine addiction.

## Fact 2: Smoking is a habit.

Physical addiction is not the only reason that people keep smoking. Another important reason is called **habit**. When you first quit smoking you may have found that you reached for your pocket or your purse to get a cigarette. That is habit. You may have had strong cigarette cravings when you drank a cup of coffee or talked on the phone, times when you often smoked in the past. This is habit. You may have found times and places which led to urges to smoke after you quit. These times become triggers for urges. As time passes, these **triggers** will weaken (if you do not smoke). The urges will go away.

## Fact 3: Smokers use nicotine to control their moods.

Smokers learn that cigarettes can help control their moods, and they become very good at getting just the right amount of nicotine to get the right effect. With time, smokers use cigarettes more and more to control their moods. When they are tense, they have a cigarette. When they are sad they have a cigarette. When they are angry, they have a cigarette. Over time, they want a cigarette when they want to change their mood. This happens a lot in times of stress. This is another reason why many smokers have trouble quitting. In times of stress, they want a cigarette, and they may not know how to deal with stress without smoking.

## Fact 4: Quitting smoking can be hard.

Smoking is a hard addiction to give up. Most alcohol and drug abuse patients say that smoking is the one addiction that they least feel they can stop. For example, Sigmund Freud gave up his cocaine addiction but could never stop smoking, despite 33 operations for mouth cancer. In the past, penalties for smoking included flogging, castration, death, and excommunication from the church. Yet none of these punishments worked to stop tobacco use. No country that has been introduced to tobacco has ever given it all up. Over 90% of quit attempts fail.



### Fact 5: People do quit smoking.

Despite the fact that nicotine is very addicting, millions of people have quit smoking. It can be done! People can succeed, even if it takes many tries. Nearly half of the people in the United States who ever smoked have now quit.

### Fact 6: Quitting smoking is a long-term process.

There are several stages to quitting smoking (see page 6). A mistake that smokers often make is to think that the job is done after a week or two, when most withdrawal feelings end. In fact, most smokers who make it to that point still end up smoking later on. Yet there are steps you can take to help you stay smoke free.

### Fact 7: Quitting smoking improves your health and quality of life.

There is nothing that causes more death and disease in the USA than tobacco smoking. Over 430,000 Americans die each year from diseases due to smoking. That's more deaths than are caused by alcohol, cocaine, heroin, car accidents, homicides, suicides, fires, and AIDS **combined!** Smokers are nearly 3 times as likely to die before age 65 as are non-smokers. They have 3 times the risk of heart disease and 10 times the risk of lung cancer. Smokers are also at increased risk for many cancers, breathing diseases, and ulcers. The good news for you is that your health begins to get better as soon as you quit smoking. The carbon monoxide in your blood goes down, your heart rate and blood pressure decrease, and your lungs start to get clean. Also, if you go ten years without smoking, your risk for the diseases stated above returns to nearly the level of someone who never smoked! Think about that.

By quitting smoking for only ten years, you may be able to make up for all those years that you smoked. Of course, this is only true if you quit smoking before any of these diseases start. But even if you have become ill due to smoking, quitting slows down your illness and it can also make you feel better. To repeat what we said earlier: by quitting smoking, you have taken the most important step that most people can take to improve their health!



# The Stages of Quitting<sup>1</sup>

*Quitting smoking does not occur all at once. It happens over time. Researchers have found that there are stages to quitting.*

## Stage 1: Contemplation.

This is when you first start thinking about quitting smoking. You are not sure about it yet. Your reasons for quitting are adding up. You are starting to think that your life would be better if you did not smoke.

## Stage 2: Preparation.

This is the stage when you decide for sure to try to quit smoking. You are thinking more and more about quitting. You think of a quitting plan. Your plan may include quitting on your own or seeking help (joining a group, using a nicotine patch, reading a self-help book, etc.). You may decide to slowly reduce your smoking, or to quit “cold turkey” (which most people find easy). Then, you pick a quit date—the first day that you will go without any cigarettes!

## Stage 3: Action.

This is it! You try to quit smoking! If you have prepared well, you have made plans that make quitting easier. You have set your schedule so that you have fewer urges to smoke, and you are avoiding as much stress as possible the first few days. You have bought food to eat when you have an urge to smoke. You have told friends that you have quit in order to get their support. You have thrown away all your cigarettes so that you are not tempted to smoke when you see them. (By the way, this is very, very important to do.)

This is also the stage when you will have nicotine withdrawal. This lasts about a week **if you do not smoke**. It will last longer if you do smoke. This is the stage when you are excited about quitting smoking, and when you spend much of your time thinking about quitting. During this stage, urges to smoke are very strong at first. They will become less strong over time. How long does the action stage last? It depends on the person, but it is about six months on average.

## Stage 4: Maintenance.

This is the last stage for a successful quitter. It begins about six months after quitting smoking. This happens slowly, rather than a fast change. By this stage, life is pretty much back to normal. You find that you hardly ever think about smoking. Urges occur far less often than in the past. You can deal with them pretty well. They are not like they used to be when you first quit.

But this stage has risks too. One of them is feeling too confident. Ex-smokers must be prepared for urges. Urges may occur at times of great stress (e.g., loss of job, or death of a family member) or at happy times (e.g., at a wedding). As time passes, even these risks get smaller and smaller.

One ex-smoker compared these last two stages to being in the army. He said that the action stage (Stage 3) was like fighting a battle. He was ready to go. It was scary but exciting. In contrast, he said that the maintenance stage (Stage 4) was like being on guard duty. Most of the time everything was all right, but he never knew when an attack (urge) would come. He had to be ready in case an urge to smoke would sneak up and take him by surprise.

The information in this *Forever Free* packet is meant for ex-smokers who are in the **action** or **maintenance** stages of quitting. There is one other stage that should be mentioned—the **relapse stage**. This stage can occur anytime during the action or maintenance stages. It happens when an ex-smoker starts smoking again. The relapsed smoker returns to an earlier stage of quitting and then tries again to quit.

### Source:

<sup>1</sup>Prochaska, J. & Di Clemente CC. (1983). *Journal of Consulting & Clinical Psychology*, 390-395.



## “Risky” Situations for Ex-Smokers

There are certain situations that are likely to cause urges to smoke in ex-smokers. We know this because we have asked hundreds of ex-smokers who returned to smoking, “What happened when you started smoking again?” Ex-smokers need to be aware of these risky situations. We believe that being “forewarned is forearmed.” Think about these situations ahead of time because they are likely to trigger urges to smoke. What are some of these risky situations?

- 1. Habit Situations (Triggers)** – These are situations in which you used to smoke. They are very much related to the act of smoking, so they tend to cause urges to smoke. As these situations occur, and you do not smoke, the urges get weaker and weaker. Within a few weeks after quitting you will have had many of these situations enough times without smoking to get rid of most of these urges. For example, drinking coffee, after a meal, talking on the phone, driving your car, and seeing other people smoke should get easier. However, every once in a while, these things may still cause an urge.

More risky are those situations that you do not have very often, but that are closely tied to smoking. For example, you may have a smoking friend or relative with whom you used to smoke, but who you have not seen since quitting. The first time you see this person—even if it is many months after quitting—you may have a strong urge to smoke. If you always smoked at baseball games, but you quit during football season, you may have urges when Spring comes around and you find yourself at the old ball park. **Once again, as you have these situations without smoking, the urges will lessen and go away.** Pretty soon you’ll be able to spend time with your smoking friends without thinking of cigarettes; and you will be able to enjoy a baseball game free of urges to smoke.

- 2. Stress and Negative Moods** – These are special types of habit situations, as stated before. But they are so risky that they need to be stated again. How risky are they? Most smokers who went back to smoking did so because of stress and negative mood. You may have learned to deal with stress by smoking. So, when you have stress after you quit, you may want a cigarette.

What kind of stress causes urges? During the first few weeks of quitting even small stresses can lead to urges. As time goes on, it tends to take larger and larger stressful things to cause relapse problems.

Some examples of stresses that have led to relapse are:

**Early on:**

- getting a traffic ticket
- fight with spouse
- bad day at work
- problem with the children

**Later:**

- getting fired
- breakup of marriage
- a serious injury
- death of a loved one

Of course, some of these events are quite serious. When they happen, you will have other things to think about besides staying off cigarettes. You will want to smoke, because you will remember how cigarettes helped you deal with stress in the past. And besides, starting smoking again will seem like a small problem compared to the current situation.

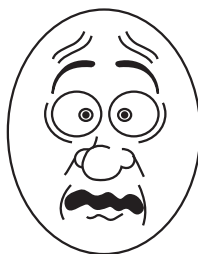
**The urge to smoke may be very strong!**

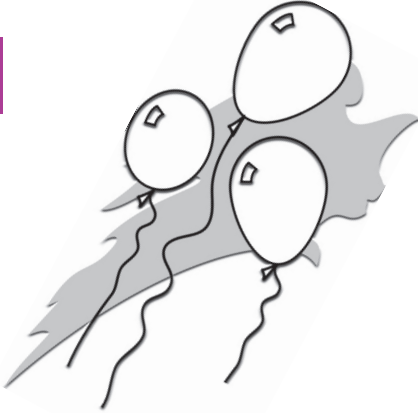
However, within a few days of the problem things will look different. If you smoked, you will begin to see that starting smoking did not really help you. In fact, it only gave you one more problem and one more reason to feel bad.

**One ex-smoker told us about the death of his wife:**

*“I thought that if I smoked, not only would I be a widower, but I would be a widower who smoked. My wife’s death would be a double tragedy then. Besides, my relapse would not be a good memorial to my wife. She would not have wanted her last act on earth to be making me start smoking again.”*

Negative moods can cause urges to smoke. Among the common moods are depression (feeling sad), anxiety (feeling tense or nervous), anger, and boredom.





**3. Positive moods and celebration** – Besides negative moods, very positive moods can also lead to problems. In the past how did you react to good news? Did you smoke? Good times can cause urges to smoke once you quit. One quarter (25%) of relapsing smokers told us that they started smoking again when they were feeling really happy or relaxed. Events like weddings and parties can be very risky because there may be other smokers around. Also if you drink alcohol (see next paragraph), you may feel so good that you do not want to fight urges to smoke.

**4. Alcohol** – Nearly half of the smokers who relapsed told us that they had been drinking alcohol during or right before relapsing. Why is alcohol so risky? There are a number of reasons: (1) habit—you are used to smoking when drinking alcohol; (2) after a few drinks it is harder to resist; (3) cigarettes are often found at the places where people drink (bars, restaurants, bowling alleys, parties).



We are not saying that you need to avoid all these risky situations all your life. Our advice is just the opposite. You probably should avoid these risky situations during your first week or two of quitting. After that point the only way that the urges will go away is if you do go through the situations. Our advice is that you prepare for risks as well as you can. Think about how you would deal with these situations. If you can plan ahead for a risky situation (such as going to a bar), know that you may have strong urges. Plan for them. More details about dealing with urges are coming up in the next section.

## How to Handle Urges to Smoke

Urges, or cravings for cigarettes are a normal part of quitting smoking. Some people worry that they will have urges to smoke for the rest of their lives. This will not happen. When you first quit you had strong urges for about a week or so. Then urges should have slowly gone away. They should have started occurring further apart and less strongly.

Most people also notice a change over time in the type of urge to smoke that they get. Early on, cravings are part of withdrawal. They are often described as being physical. Ex-smokers feel the craving in their chest or heart or throat. As physical withdrawal goes away, ex-smokers often describe urges as being more emotional. They have habit-related urges, and at times they miss smoking. Later, smokers tend to describe their urges as thoughts or memories of smoking that are easy to handle and that go away fast.

The good news is that urges will lessen until they go away. Also, they will tend to get milder and easier to handle. But, as we stated before (see “Risky Situations for Ex-smokers”), even after you have quit for weeks or months, stress, negative and positive moods, alcohol, and other situations can produce strong urges to smoke—especially if you have not had these situations much since quitting. These urges will be rare: you may go weeks or months without any urges. But when they do occur they can be very risky because they are unexpected. Thus, urges after quitting can be a bit like a roller coaster: lots of ups and downs before the urges end at last.

It is important that ex-smokers keep finding ways to deal with urges to smoke—even months after quitting. Researchers have compared successful and unsuccessful quitters to find out what makes them different. What do they do?

The successful quitters use **coping skills** when they have an urge. A coping skill is something that gets your mind off the urge. There are two main kinds of coping skills:

### 1. Behavioral Coping Skills – are actions that you take or can do.

#### Examples include:

- Leave the situation
- Take a deep breath
- Chew gum
- Eat something
- Go for a walk
- Call a friend
- Exercise

**2. Mental Coping Skills** – are things that you tell yourself.

**Examples are:**

- Tell yourself, “I can do it. Smoking is not an option.”
- Think of the reasons you wanted to quit.
- Think of how much progress you have made so far.
- Tell yourself that smoking will not solve the problem.
- Think about what smoking does to your health.

Are some of these coping skills better than others? Research shows that it does not matter much **which** coping skills you use, just as long as you use some. It also seems to help if you use **both** behavioral and mental coping skills when you have an urge. That means, tell yourself something, and also take some action.

**What does not work?** Researchers have found that those ex-smokers who try to rely on “willpower” alone tend to fail. Those are the ex-smokers who just say, “I am not going to smoke,” but do not do anything to take their mind off of cigarettes. At some point they get worn down by urges. The other people who tended to fail are those who “beat up” on themselves for having urges to smoke. They told themselves things like, “I am weak for wanting a cigarette,” or “I will never get over wanting to smoke.” Those kind of thoughts just made them want to smoke even more, and they did.

Take some time to think about some coping skills that you could use if you were to have a strong urge to smoke tomorrow. Think about this ahead of time. Be prepared to stay quit!

Write down at least two coping skills of each type that you will use when you have a strong urge to smoke:

**Behavioral: (What can I do?)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Mental: (What can I say?)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## A Non-Smoking Lifestyle

So far we have asked you to think about risky situations that may lead to strong urges to smoke. Also you should think about using mental coping skills if and when you do have those urges. Also, ex-smokers often find that staying quit is made easier if they make some changes to their lifestyle. Some questions that you might want to ask yourself are:

**Do I need better ways to deal with stress?** All of us have stress in our lives. Most smokers have learned to deal with stress in part by having a cigarette. And, as we have stated, stressful times are a big risk factor after quitting smoking.

**If you no longer have cigarettes to deal with stress, what else can you do? How would a non-smoker deal with this problem?**

- **Deal with the problem right away.** Smokers sometimes use cigarettes as a way to avoid dealing with a problem. Smoking puts distance between themselves and the problem situation or person. Yet it does not solve the problem that is causing the stress.
- **Look at the big picture.** Sometimes people find themselves getting very upset over problems that are really small. For example, a flat tire is frustrating, but it will not have any lasting effect on your life.
- **Learn how to relax.** Relaxation is a skill that many people have found useful. But it is a skill that requires practice and learning. Your library or bookstore should have books and tapes for you.
- **Give yourself time to let the mood pass.** Once time passes, the problem will often seem less stressful.
- **Get support from others.** Talking to a friend or to other people with the same problems can be a great relief from stress. For those people who have more severe problems with stress and negative moods, a support group or counseling may be helpful.

**Do I have enough fun in my life?** We can look at what we do in our life in two ways:

1. **Wants** - Things we enjoy doing.
2. **Shoulds** - Things we feel we have to do.

As time goes by, we tend to do more of the “shoulds” in our lives, and forget about the “wants.”

Think about your “wants” and “shoulds.” Are there things that you enjoy but have not been doing? These may be hobbies, social/family events, sports, reading, and so on. Smoking may have given you some pleasure (at a very high price). Now that you have quit, try to bring your “wants” and “shoulds” back into balance by finding other (healthier) sources of pleasure.

**List three fun activities that you want to do more often:**

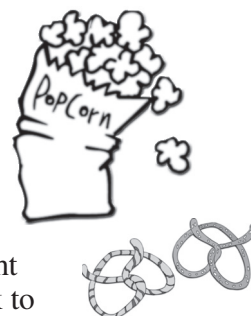
1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Am I worried about gaining weight?** Weight gain is a worry of many people trying to quit smoking. Some weight gain is likely. The average is about 6-8 pounds, but it might be a lot less or a lot more. Why do ex-smokers gain weight?

1. While you were smoking, nicotine increased your metabolism (energy needed for the body’s functions) in an unhealthy way. This burned calories. When you quit, your metabolism slows down to normal. For a while, it may even slow down below normal until your body gets used to being free of nicotine.
2. An increase in appetite (especially for fatty and sweet foods) is a common nicotine withdrawal symptom. Like other withdrawal symptoms, it will pass and go away.
3. As a smoker, you were used to having something in your mouth. For a while after quitting, many smokers will eat food instead of having a cigarette.
4. When you are not smoking, food smells and tastes better. You may eat more because you enjoy it more.

The good news is that most ex-smokers will lose most of the weight they gained, without doing anything. However, there are some things that you can do to lose weight gain after quitting.

1. Choose snacks that are low in fat and calories. Many tasty and healthy products are now on the market, like no-salt pretzels or popcorn.
2. Exercise. No diet can work without exercise. Even a slight increase in activity (such as taking a walk) can help. Talk to your doctor before making any major changes in diet or exercise.



Also, think about how much better you will look and feel as a non-smoker, even if you weigh a few pounds more. Your skin is healthier, your teeth whiter. You do not smell of smoke. And you are far more healthy!

## What If You Do Smoke?

As an ex-smoker, your goal should be to **never** have another cigarette. Many smokers fail because they tell themselves that they “can have **just one**.” You must tell yourself that you cannot have “just one.” This is even more true of cigarettes than it is of alcohol for alcoholics! Remember how addicting nicotine is. Research has shown that if you have even a single cigarette after quitting, there is a 90% chance that you will return to regular smoking! It might not happen right away. It may take several weeks, but one cigarette almost always leads to another, and another... So, you should do whatever it takes to avoid having any cigarettes. This is very important.

But, what if you do end up having a cigarette? What then? Some people are afraid to read this part because they fear that it will make them think that they can have a cigarette and then get better. But remember, if you do smoke, the odds are against you. We added this section to give you a fighting chance against those odds.

Read on...



Think of it like preparing for a fire. If you have children you may have taken the time to talk to them about what to do in case of fire. They should know how to get out. They should feel doors for heat before opening them. They should roll on the ground if their clothes catch on fire. And so on. However, they also should know that a fire is very serious. Just because they now know how to get ready for a fire does not mean that it is OK to play with matches. They still need to prevent fires at all costs. The same is true for smoking. Avoid it at all costs, but know what to do just in case.

Two things tend to happen when people have a cigarette after quitting. First, they think that all is lost and, therefore, that there is no point in trying any longer. It is like the dieter who has that first piece of cake: “I have blown my diet, so I may as well finish the cake.” Thinking like that only gets you into more trouble. An entire cake is worse than one slice, and a pack of cigarettes is worse than one puff. The second thing that happens after a cigarette, is that smokers tend to feel guilty and depressed. They tend to “beat themselves up.” This makes them feel worse. And remember that one of the big risk factors is negative mood. This leads to an even greater urge to smoke, and then they often keep smoking.

### What should you do if you find yourself smoking a cigarette?

1. Put it out. Get rid of any cigarettes.
2. Think of that cigarette as a “slip” instead of a “relapse.” It does not have to mean that all is lost.
3. Make that cigarette your last. Do not put off quitting again until tomorrow, next week, or next year. The sooner you try to quit, the easier it will be, because your body will not yet have gotten used to nicotine.
4. Even though you may feel bad, do not “beat yourself up.”
5. Instead, learn from it. Ask yourself what led up to your smoking? You now know that this is a high risk situation. You will need to get prepared for it in the future.
6. Use your coping skills to deal with urges to smoke.

## The Most Important Messages

You should be proud for quitting smoking and taking a step toward a better and longer life. Once again, congratulations!

We ask that you save this copy of *Forever Free* and re-read it many times during the first year or two after quitting. People often forget the important points. To help you remember, here are some important *Forever Free* messages.

1. Remember the situations that are risky to you. Be prepared for them. They may be:
  - Habit situations (things you used to do while smoking)
  - Stress and negative moods.
  - Positive moods and celebrations.
  - Alcohol.
2. When having a strong urge to smoke, use coping skills to get your mind off smoking.
3. Do not fool yourself into thinking, “I can have just one cigarette.” Avoid smoking at all costs.
4. If you do smoke, take action right away to avoid having any other cigarettes. Quit again at once.

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