

QUIT SMOKING COMFORTABLY

COMPREHENSIVE SMOKING TREATMENT PROGRAM

Clarifying myths and answering questions to help you stop smoking.

MYTH: I have to wait until I really want to quit before I can be successful.

FACT: Being reluctant to quit, even though you would really like to, is the basic definition of addiction. While everyone wishes they could quit, most of us also wish we could continue to smoke, only without the problems that come along with it. This conflict can last for many years, sometimes until after a smoker has already become sick. Do not wait until your reluctance goes away. Be honest with yourself and your family about how you feel and get information on quitting comfortably and effectively.

MYTH: I will not be able to deal with stress without smoking.

FACT: The truth is that a smokers' level of stress is actually higher than the stress of a non-smoker. We only smoke for a short time during the day and during this time, we may feel relaxed. However, the need for another cigarette will come soon. The anticipation of not smoking between cigarettes may cause stress to go up and can result in slightly above average levels of daily stress. People who quit smoking with help can learn to manage their stress more effectively.

MYTH: I will gain a lot of weight when I stop smoking.

FACT: This is a very common concern for smokers. Not everyone gains weight when they stop smoking. In reality, we can prevent weight gain by using nicotine replacement and other medications to control cigarette cravings.

MYTH: I have heard that electronic cigarettes are safer than cigarettes.

FACT: There are hundreds of products that claim to be e-cigarettes. There are currently no controls in place to monitor what goes into these products. The fake smoke is not water vapor. Electronic cigarettes have not been shown to help people stop smoking and they are not currently recommended as a method for treating tobacco dependence.



OUR TEAM

Frank T. Leone, MD, MS
Director

Sarah Evers-Casey, MPH, MTTs
Associate Director

Jody Nicoloso, MTTs
Project Coordinator

Anil Vachani, MD, MSCE
Program Faculty

LOCATIONS

Harron Lung Center
Penn Medicine at University City
3737 Market Street
10th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Perelman Center for Advanced Medicine
3400 Civic Center Boulevard
West Pavilion, First Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19104

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call
888.PENN.STOP (888.736.6786).

Will I become addicted to the patch?

Addiction is not just about the presence of nicotine, but about how fast it gets to the brain. It takes just a few seconds for the nicotine from a cigarette to reach the brain. The delivery of nicotine in a patch does not have this peak; therefore, you cannot become addicted.

Whenever I think about quitting, I get this uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach. What is going on?

Most smokers know smoking is not good for them. But their gut instincts tell them that quitting is a bad idea. This creates a conflict that many smokers deal with for decades – wanting to quit but not wanting to quit at the same time. This can result in feelings of shame, embarrassment and fear of failure.

Is it safe to use more than one of these medications at a time?

Under a doctor's direction, it is safe to use several of these medications in combination. Your doctor may recommend more than one because together they can be more effective than alone.

If I smoke a cigarette while wearing the patch, will I have a heart attack?

No. An accidental cigarette while wearing the patch is not enough to cause health problems. If you happen to smoke a cigarette, do not take the patch off. This may be a sign that a higher nicotine patch dose is necessary.

Is it better not to have nicotine in my body?

Nicotine is not the harmful part of a cigarette. The thousands of other toxins present in tobacco smoke are the dangerous parts. By temporarily substituting a safe form of nicotine for cigarette smoke, your body has a chance to adjust to not smoking in a safe way. In fact, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is always safer than smoking.

Does varenicline (Chantix) really cause suicidal thoughts?

No. There have been a number of studies which have looked at this issue and varenicline does not appear to increase the likelihood of depression or suicidal thoughts, even among patients with a history of depression or bipolar disorder.

I have quit other habits in the past, but this one seems harder. Why?

Cigarettes deliver a "free-base" form of nicotine to the brain. Just like crack cocaine is more addictive than plain cocaine, free-base nicotine is much more powerful than plain nicotine. That is why even the idea of giving up cigarettes can be so depressing. The good news is that, unlike many other drugs, nicotine addiction can be treated fairly easily and effectively. Ask for help. You not only deserve to quit, you deserve to quit well.

I once quit for over six months but then began smoking again. I had to be over the addiction by then, right?

While nicotine leaves your system within a few days of quitting, the effect it has on your brain is more long lasting. Your brain needs time to heal and it can take up to a few years. During this time, it is not uncommon to feel a subtle desire to pick up a cigarette. A slip is not a sign of weakness, but a sign that your brain has not finished the healing process. It does not mean you are a smoker again, it is simply the time to ask for help and get back to quitting.

I watched my mom struggle and die from lung cancer because of smoking, but I am still not scared enough to quit. How is that even possible?

Motivation to quit is complicated. It is not because you do not understand how bad smoking is for you and it is not because you do not care about your health. It is because nicotine is a powerful and addictive drug that is capable of motivating us to keep using, more so than even alcohol or heroin. The fact that you can keep smoking despite your experience is not a function of how weak you are, it is a function of how powerful nicotine is.

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