

Health Bulletin

Quitting Smoking: You Don't Have To Go It Alone

(NAPS)—Quitting smoking can be tough—most smokers make several attempts to quit before succeeding—but it can be done. Thankfully, there are many effective ways available through your doctor that are proven to help you stop smoking.

Risks and Rewards

One of the best things you can do for your health is to quit smoking or never start. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability and death in the United States. Smoking causes one in every five deaths and negatively affects almost every organ in your body.

If you are pregnant, smoking can lead to negative health effects to your unborn baby, such as being born too early and at a low birth weight.

The good news is that people who quit smoking greatly lower their risk of disease and early death. People who quit smoking reduce their risk of lung cancer, heart disease and respiratory illness, among other diseases. Pregnant women who quit smoking reduce their risk of having a baby with low birth weight or born too early.

Help Is Out There

Studies show that both therapy and medication can help people quit smoking.

Recently, the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force reviewed evidence to determine which methods are most effective at helping people quit smoking. Based on the studies it reviewed, the Task Force recommends behavioral therapy and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—approved smoking cessation medications for adults who are not pregnant. For pregnant women, the Task Force recommends using behavioral interventions.

Examples of behavioral therapy are counseling (by telephone and in person) and customized self-help guides and brochures. Therapy that has been shown to work provides social support and helps people develop problem-solving skills so they can recognize the situations in which they are more likely to smoke; overcome the challenges that might get in their way of quitting, such as stress or cravings; and make a plan to quit. Self-help guides that have been shown to work include information



Your doctor can help you stop smoking, with counseling and medications to help you quit.

that goes beyond just explaining the health risks of smoking and the benefits of quitting. They should also provide information tailored for each person as well as advice about how to get support online or by phone.

The FDA has approved some medications to treat nicotine dependence in adults who are not pregnant. These include bupropion SR (sustained release) and varenicline (more commonly known by the brand names Zyban and Chantix), as well as nicotine replacement therapy patches, lozenges, gum, inhalers and nasal spray. Talk to your doctor about which medications might work best for you.

What About E-Cigarettes?

The Task Force also looked at studies on using electronic nicotine delivery systems, such as electronic cigarettes (or e-cigarettes), to help people quit smoking. Right now, there's not enough evidence about how well e-cigarettes work to help people quit or about their safety or benefits and harms. The Task Force is encouraging more research about using e-cigarettes for quitting smoking.

The best quitting plan is the one that works for you. Your doctor can work with you to see that you have the best chance of success.

Protecting Your Health

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. The Task Force makes evidence-based recommendations on primary care services.

Learn More

For more information on the Task Force and to read the full report on smoking cessation, visit www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org.

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