

# To SMOKE or not to SMOKE

You may have tried to stop smoking or you may just be thinking about it. We look at the facts behind smoking and some of the ways and aids to stop smoking.

## Smoking: Your life – Your choice

If you are a smoker, you may feel under attack from adverts, family and even your doctor. So what's the big deal? At the end of the day, you can only give up smoking if you want to. This means making a choice. But you can only make this choice if you have the information. We provide you with the information that you need.

### Fact 1

It may seem incredible, but **smoke contains over 4000 different chemicals**. These add up to a poisonous cocktail.

### Fact 2

Cigarettes contain nicotine. **Nicotine makes your heart beat faster and gives an instant 'lift'**. This is why you may enjoy smoking. Unfortunately you can get addicted to nicotine, which is why smoking is so difficult to give up.

### Fact 3

**Cigarette smoke contains carbon monoxide**. After a while, it starves your body of oxygen and damages your lungs and blood vessels.

### Fact 4

Because **smoking affects the amount of blood and oxygen that can get through to the unborn baby**, many babies whose mother's smoke are born underweight and early. In some cases, smoking is a factor in stillbirth. Babies who are premature or underweight cannot always go home with their mothers after the birth because they need extra medical attention.

### Fact 5

It's not just women who are affected by smoking. Smoking can actually damage men's sperm lowering their sperm count.

### Fact 6

Because smoking affects the amount of oxygen available in our bodies, it is harder for cells to be repaired and maintained. This is why **skin ages more in smokers** and why they are more prone to infections.

### Fact 7

Babies whose parents smoke are at a higher risk of cot death. There are a number of reasons for this, but they all link back to reduced oxygen levels. Even holding a baby after you have smoked can reduce their oxygen levels.

### Fact 8

Children who see their parents smoke are more likely to become smokers themselves. The old expression 'do as I say, not as I do' comes to mind here! Giving up before your child is born means that you will be giving them a good chance of being free of the weed.

### Did you know?

**Stopping smoking when you are pregnant makes an almost immediate difference to your baby. One study showed that after just 48 hours, unborn babies were getting up to 8% more oxygen.**

**More people die through smoking tobacco than through taking any other legal or illegal drug.**

# Saying farewell to smoking

## – SOME PRACTICAL TIPS

### 1

#### PLAN AHEAD

Research shows that people who plan ahead are more likely to succeed in giving up cigarettes. Choose a time when you aren't under stress and give yourself a start date. If you have already tried and failed in the past to give up, think about what made you go back to smoking. Aim to stop this from happening again.

### 2

#### LEARN ABOUT YOUR SMOKING HABIT

Think about the situations in which you smoke. Keep a smoking diary so that you can see when you are in the habit of smoking. Go on to the [www.givingupsmoking.co.uk](http://www.givingupsmoking.co.uk) website to see how addicted you are to nicotine. As a broad rule of thumb, if you smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day and desperately need a cigarette first thing in the morning you will find it hard to give up without some sort of support such as nicotine replacement patches.

### 3

#### GET ALL THE HELP YOU CAN

See your doctor about nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) patches or gum. These are now available on prescription. Find out about smoking cessation clinics and also other sources of support such as [www.givingupsmoking.co.uk](http://www.givingupsmoking.co.uk). Write the number of the NHS smoking helpline on all telephones (0800 169 0 169). Tell friends and family that you are giving up get them to help and support you.

### 4

#### REMOVE POSSIBLE REMINDERS IN YOUR HOME

It is much harder to give up if you can see and smell things that remind you of smoking. Take away ashtrays, clean rooms thoroughly to remove smoke smells.

### 5

#### KEEP REMINDING YOURSELF WHY YOU ARE TRYING TO GIVE UP

Write down all the good reasons for giving up – looking better, more money, no more cravings.

### 6

#### AVOID SITUATIONS WHICH MAY BE DIFFICULT

Work out where you are most likely to fall back into smoking. This may be with certain friends or when you are bored. Think about what you could do to change the situation. If you are not sure about when you smoke, try keeping a smoking diary before you give up. This will help you to identify times when you smoke.

### 7

#### WHEN YOU GET THE URGE TO SMOKE, FIND SOMETHING ELSE TO DO INSTEAD

Phone a friend, the NHS helpline and try to do something else with your hands and mouth. Some ex-smokers use chewing gum, suck lollipops or occupy their hands with worry beads. It has even been known for people to take up knitting.

### 8

#### SET TARGETS AND REWARD YOURSELF IF YOU REACH THEM.

If you haven't smoked for a week you could use the money you have saved to buy something really nice for yourself.

### 9

#### DON'T GIVE UP EVEN IF YOU HAVE A LAPSE

If you have a cigarette, don't feel that all is lost and there's no point in going on. Every time that you can manage without smoking is a victory in itself. Try to work out what caused you to slip-up and think of strategies to cope with this when it happens in the future.

### 10

#### IF YOU CAN'T GIVE UP, TRY CUTTING DOWN

For some people stopping smoking completely does not work. Try cutting down on the number of cigarettes you smoke instead and build up the number of hours that you can manage without a cigarette especially first thing in the morning. Switch to the lowest brand possible that you can. Consider having some rooms that are smoke free.

# Support and ways of giving up SMOKING

Once you have decided to give up smoking, it is a good idea to be aware of the support available and ways of going about giving up. We look at the variety of methods that may help you to quit.

## Cold turkey

### What is it?

Going cold turkey means stopping smoking completely and not replacing the nicotine. Cigarettes contain nicotine which is an extremely addictive substance. When your body craves a cigarette, it is actually looking to get nicotine.

### How does it work?

Cold turkey literally means stopping smoking altogether.

This means that the body has to cope without any nicotine.

### Does it work?

Success can be very variable. Many people do give up this way, but success depends very much on willpower and also the strength of your addiction. The physical cravings for nicotine can carry on for 2-3 weeks and so 'cold turkey' without any other form of support can be very hard going.

## Zyban (bupropion)

### What is it?

Zyban is a fairly new drug which reduces the cravings for cigarettes.

### How does it work?

It works by suppressing a part of the brain that helps smokers enjoy their cigarettes. Zyban is taken before you give up smoking and it should put you off smoking because you no longer get anything out of smoking.

### Does it work?

Zyban has been shown to be very effective, although there are side effects such as nausea and headaches. Zyban is not suitable for pregnant women or those about to become so. It is also not advised for people with liver disease or epilepsy.

### Where can I get it from?

Zyban is a prescription-only medicine. Your doctor will only prescribe it for you if he/she is sure that you are a suitable candidate as it does have side effects.

## Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

### What is it?

Nicotine replacement therapy comes in different forms. You can get gum, patches, nasal sprays and microtabs.

### How does it work?

Nicotine replacement therapy contains small amounts of nicotine. It works by reducing the withdrawal symptoms and can prevent you from having strong cravings.

### Which NRT product should I use?

Different products work in slightly different ways and so it is a good idea to get some advice as to which will work best for you. If you are pregnant or have a medical condition, talk to your doctor and check that you can use these products.

- **Patches** worn on the arm release steady doses throughout the day and night.

- **Nasal sprays** give a strong instant dose of nicotine and are usually used by very heavy smokers.
- **Gum** is chewed and then put onto the cheek of the mouth so that the nicotine is absorbed through the gum. Gum allows you to control your nicotine dose.
- **Microtabs** are popped under the tongue when you have a craving and gradually dissolve.

### Does it work?

It is very popular and has been shown to help people who really want to give up. Some research shows that people who use NRT to help them give up smoking are twice as likely to succeed as those who don't.

### Where can I get it from?

You can buy NRT products in chemists, but your doctor can also give it to you on prescription.

## Smoking cessation clinics

### What are they?

Smoking cessation clinics are also called 'Stop smoking' clinics. They are often held in GPs surgeries or health clinics but are also in some hospitals.

### How does it work?

Smoking cessation clinics work by giving practical advice and support to smokers. The idea is to help smokers find ways to stop smoking and to provide information that will help. Patients are usually encouraged to attend weekly and may as part of their visit discuss any difficulties they are having including the odd lapse. The nurses or health professionals

running the clinics are very sympathetic and look at ways to help smokers to manage their addiction.

### Does it work?

Many smokers find the weekly visit very useful as part of an overall plan to give up smoking. Success at the end of the day is not guaranteed, but research shows that where smokers are being supported, they are more likely to succeed.

### Where can I get it from?

Either contact your doctor's surgery or phone the NHS smoking helpline on 0800 169 0169. Sessions are free.

## Acupuncture

### What is it?

Acupuncture is a Chinese method of healing which has been used for many centuries.

### How does it work?

Needles are inserted at particular points in the body to cause patients to relax. Surprisingly, people who try this method do not find it painful. The needles are then removed, but two or three are sometimes left in the ear lobe. Patients are then encouraged to touch these when a craving comes on.

### Does it work?

Some people find this method very effective, although it is not clinically proven.

### Where can I get it from?

You are likely to have to pay for acupuncture sessions. The cost of each session can vary according to each practitioner. Find an acupuncturist through a recommendation if possible. Make sure that the acupuncturist is a member of either the British Medical Acupuncture Society (tel 01925 730727, website [www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk](http://www.medical-acupuncture.co.uk)) or the British Acupuncture Council (tel 020 8735 0400, website [www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk)).

## Hypnotherapy

### What is it?

Hypnotherapy is a treatment that works on the subconscious mind. No drugs are taken.

### How does it work?

Many people have not only a physical addiction to smoking but also a psychological one. Smoking cigarettes can be a way of coping with stressful situations or provide you with pleasant memories. Hypnotherapy works by giving your subconscious new messages about smoking.

### Does it work?

Hypnotherapy is gaining in popularity. Some ex-smokers, swear by it, although there is no guarantee that it will work for you.

### Where can I get it from?

The chances are that you will need to see a hypnotherapist privately and pay for your consultation. Prices range from area to area. To choose a hypnotherapist, look for recommendations from friends or people that you know who have found it helpful. Hypnotherapists advertise their services in a range of places such as Yellow Pages, health food shops or local papers. Check that your hypnotherapist is qualified and a member of a professional organisation such as the British Society of Clinical Hypnosis (tel 01262 403103, website [fmp.bscl.org.uk](http://fmp.bscl.org.uk)) or registered with the British Hypnotherapy Association (tel 020 7723 4443).



### Third time lucky!!

**Linda 30 and her partner Barry have two children, Niamh aged 2 years and Ben 15 months.**

**Linda and Barry gave up smoking before she became pregnant with Niamh. She had two failed attempts at stopping smoking before she finally cracked it.**

'When I talked about having children with Barry, he was clear that he didn't want us to start a family until I had stopped smoking. His sister's baby had died of cot death and he had read that it was more likely to happen where the parents had smoked.

My first attempt only lasted three days. Looking back, I can see why it didn't work. Smoking was part of my life since I was eighteen years old and when I met Barry and tried giving up, I was probably smoking around thirty cigarettes a day. He didn't know how many I was smoking because if he asked, I would always knock off a few because I knew that he didn't like me smoking.

When I first stopped smoking, Barry was so pleased for me. He bought me a little present each day to help me. I thought that I could do it, but the cravings were awful. In the end, one morning when Barry had left for work, I went round to a neighbour who I hardly knew and asked for a cigarette. That really was the end of that attempt, because once I had started to smoke, I couldn't face going without again. I told myself that a few wouldn't really matter and that after all it was my life and my health. It was awful telling Barry because he so wanted me to stop and he so wanted to help me. The second time I gave up, I lasted longer and after the first attempt I was smoking a bit less anyway. I had found out about the Nicotine gum and was a little more prepared. I did quite well and got to nearly a month without anything. It was something stupid that got me

going again and afterwards I was really cross with myself. I had a bad day at work and went out for a drink with a friend. I then got a call to say that my gran wasn't well. I was upset and stressed and suddenly I felt that I couldn't cope unless I had a cigarette. It was like a part of me was looking for an excuse to start again and here it was. The worst bit was telling Barry because he was so sure that I had got over it. The good thing about the second attempt was that I had seen that I could manage to get over the first weeks and so if I had done it once, I could do it again. The second attempt also made me more determined to crack it. Quite quickly, I had noticed that food tasted really good and I just generally felt more alive.

A few weeks later, I gave up again. I was more ready than ever before. I visited my doctor who gave me Nicotine patches and I also went every week to the stop smoking clinic at the surgery. They were brilliant and really helped me to keep going. Barry helped me by making sure that the house was clear of ashtrays and together we tried to do new things together so that my routine was different. I put the money I was saving into a bank account and mentally thought of it as my baby fund! After six months, I knew that I had cracked it and soon after I fell pregnant with Niamh. I don't regret giving up. It wasn't easy, but I would do anything for my kids and knowing that this gave them a better start in life makes me feel quite proud of myself.'

**Q. Help! I'm already pregnant and I still smoke. Am I harming my baby?**

**A.** The sooner you can give up or cut right down the better. While not wanting to scare you, it is only fair that you understand that smoking does put babies at risk. Ask your doctor for advice; you may be able to go on a short course of NRT or start visiting your local stop smoking clinic. If you continue to smoke during the pregnancy, look at ways of reducing the risk. (see box below)

**Q. I've tried giving up smoking before, but it has never worked. What should I do?**

**A.** Don't beat yourself around the head with guilt. Guilt can actually make you smoke more! Many people need more than one attempt before they finally break the habit. The key to finally giving up is to plan your attempt and in the meantime to cut back. There is now plenty of support and advice around to help would-be quitters. Think about visiting your GP or phoning the NHS Smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169 for advice .

**Q. I want to give up smoking, but don't want to put on weight**

**A.** Smoking affects people's taste buds and so food doesn't have the same taste. It also means that instead of nibbling when you are bored, you have something else in your mouth. Many people think that they will automatically put on weight when they stop smoking, but this does not have to be the case. Buy in lots of fresh fruit and dried raisins, prunes and even carrot sticks. You will find that these suddenly taste better because your taste buds can now pick up the flavours. If you need something to put in your mouth because you are missing cigarettes, try chewing sugar-free gum.

**Q. I have heard that Zyban is worth trying. Where can I get hold of it?**

**A.** Zyban also known as bupropion is a new drug and is only available on prescription. It is thought to be an effective treatment especially if it is taken alongside a smoking plan. It does have some side effects and so is not prescribed for everyone. It is not suitable for women who are pregnant or people with epilepsy. This may mean that if you are trying for a baby, your doctor will not prescribe it for you.

## Last word if you have to smoke...

Smoking is definitely not safe. If you decide that you do not want to give up, there are a few things that you can do to make smoking a little safer. While this advice cannot guarantee that you will have a healthy pregnancy, it is worth following as even cutting down the amount you smoke will make a difference to a developing baby.

- Switch to low tar cigarettes.
- Do not smoke down to the filter. Try and leave the longest stub you can as this will reduce the amount of chemicals you are taking in.

- Cut down to five cigarettes a day.
- Try not to smoke one cigarette straight after another, otherwise you will always be looking for the next one.
- Avoid getting into the habit of smoking and drinking at the same time. It makes giving one or the other up, or cutting back, much harder.
- Stick to tobacco. Avoid other drugs such as cocaine or cannabis.
- Do not smoke around babies and make their bedrooms smoke-free zones.