

Quitting is More than Cold Turkey

By Jeanyan Kung, Leave The Pack Behind

The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit recently released data indicating that more than 80% of smokers aged 19 – 29 acknowledge the benefits of quitting. Are you thinking of quitting smoking? Do you know how?

It's **your** choice! Quit because **you** want to, and when **you** are **ready** to. Most people quitting for the first time try to do it on their own – “cold turkey”. That works for some people, but there are many options available. If one way doesn't work, don't give up. Try another one, or even a combination of strategies. Remember to not lose confidence if relapse occurs. This could be an opportunity to review what worked and what did not work to build a more effective quit plan. Good luck!

Tips to Quitting

1. **Set a quit date**, and mark it on your calendar. Give some thought to where you will be and what you will be doing at that time. It may be more difficult to quit in the midst of final exams or any other stressful situation. Quitting as a New Year's resolution or the beginning of the summer break can make a good, fresh start.
2. Think about and write down your **reasons** for smoking and for quitting (self-image, finances, health, social life...), make a **commitment** to quit and develop your **plan**.
3. Identify triggers that cause the desire to smoke, and find ways to avoid those trigger situations and deal with temptations.
4. Ask friends and family for support.
5. Get peer support and free carbon monoxide (CO) testing on campus from Leave the Pack Behind www.leavethepackbehind.org/mcmaster
6. Register for a quit-smoking contest or research study to stay committed (www.ontario.ca/smokefree)

Ways to Quit

Pick one method or combine a few with quitting cold turkey. The chances of quitting successfully double when an aid is used in conjunction with quitting cold turkey.

Method	Brief Description of Method
Cold Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abrupt withdrawal
Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-cancerous aids to help wean off the addiction to nicotine especially during a craving• Can come in the form of an adhesive patch, chewing gum, lozenge, or inhaler
Bupropion SR	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Branded as Zyban and Wellbutrin SR• Antidepressant medicine in pill-form to control nicotine cravings in the brain
Varenicline Tartrate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Branded as Champix• Pill-form, targets nicotine receptors in the brain to reduce cravings• Makes smoking less enjoyable
Leave The Pack Behind (LTPB) “Quit” and “Smoke” booklets and other LTPB resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Quit” and “Smoke” booklets are written in a student-friendly manner providing intriguing facts on smoking• Visiting LTPB office hours or display tables provide peer support and free resources LTPB office is in MUSC B106• LTPB offers free CO testing to monitor progress.
Talking to a health professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talking to a nurse, physician, or pharmacist will provide information that is unattainable elsewhere• Health professionals can teach more about medications or which dosage of NRT is most suitable• Checking in with a doctor to track progress can be motivating
Alternative Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hypnotherapy, acupuncture, lasers, and herbals may be popular but have never been proven to be helpful• Do your research!

What to Expect When Quitting

With low levels or no nicotine in the blood, you can expect to experience emotional (irritability, anger, tension, depression...) and physical (sleeping problems, headaches, cough, hunger...) withdrawal. Your body will adjust and eventually nicotine withdrawal symptoms will disappear. Most symptoms last 7 to 10 days and can be managed. For free personalized advice and counselling, try www.smokershelpline.ca

Do not be discouraged by the short-term nicotine withdrawal symptoms. The long-term health benefits of being smoke-free will be worth the effort.

Health Benefits include:

- Within 8 hours of quitting, carbon monoxide levels drop and oxygen levels rise in the blood
- Within 2 – 3 weeks, the lungs are stronger and breathing is easier
- After 1 – 9 months, coughing, congestion, tiredness, and shortness of breath improves
- After 1 year, the risk of a heart attack is cut in half
- Quitting before the age of 35 can result in a life expectancy comparable to someone who never smoked before,
- After quitting smoking for 10 – 15 years, the risk of cancer is equivalent to the level of someone who never smoked before

Combat Those Cravings!

Cravings don't last forever – in fact they only last a few minutes – so hang in there. Using healthy distractions can make quitting easier.

Fidgety fingers that need to hold something?

- ➔ Play with an elastic band that doubles as “promise-to-quit” bracelet
- ➔ Hold a straw - you can chew on it too

Mouth is craving something to bite on?

- ➔ Try chewing gum, eat celery, apples, or carrot sticks, have a breath mint or lozenge

Need to light up?

- ➔ Light an aromatherapy candle instead and do some deep breathing or a self reflection

Alter Your Environment!

Still living in an environment where ashtrays, lighters, and cigarettes are available?

- ➔ Create a smoke-free environment and put a smoke-free housing sticker in visible areas
- ➔ Throw out all ashtrays, lighters, and cigarettes
- ➔ Open up windows and use air fresheners to eliminate tobacco odour

People are smoking outside of the bar?

- ➔ Find new outlets of entertainment where smoking is not prevalent like bowling or hiking
- ➔ Find a new hobby or get involved with volunteering or a student club at school

Fear of gaining weight as food tastes better and appetite is no longer suppressed post-quitting?

- ➔ Incorporate more exercise as simple as walking and climbing the stairs
- ➔ Eat many small healthy meals or snacks during the day opposed to the 3 big meals to keep the metabolism going
- ➔ Drink lots of water to feel full and stay hydrated

Loved smoking after eating?

- ➔ Get up and brush your teeth
- ➔ Eat fresh fruit for dessert
- ➔ Skip the coffee, and take a mini walk

ARE YOU READY?

Reference: www.lung.ca

www.leavethepackbehind.org/pdf/bulletins/Clinic_Bulletin_2009_v09.pdf