

Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do to help your cancer treatment work better and reduce the side effects of treatment.

Being smoke-free also reduces the chance of your cancer coming back, or getting another kind of cancer.

#### RADIATION THERAPY

- Radiation therapy works best when the amount of oxygen in your body is normal. When you smoke, your oxygen level drops, making it harder for radiation to do its job.
- If you can't stop smoking, avoid smoking before and after your radiation therapy appointment.

#### CHEMOTHERAPY

- Chemotherapy drugs work better in people who don't smoke.
- Cigarette smoke has chemicals that can lower the amount of some chemotherapy drugs in your blood, making them less effective.

#### SURGERY

- Quitting smoking, or reducing the number of cigarettes you smoke, can make surgery safer and help you recover faster.
- If possible, try to quit at least 4 weeks before your surgery. But quitting at any time before surgery is helpful.
- People who don't smoke:
  - are less likely to have complications during or after their surgery
  - are less likely to have infections
  - may heal faster and go home sooner

## Tips to help you quit

### The 4 Ds

You can learn how to avoid tobacco by using the 4 Ds:

<b>DELAY</b>	Cravings often go away within 3 to 5 minutes, so try to wait it out.
<b>DRINK WATER</b>	Instead of reaching for tobacco, reach for a glass of cold water.
<b>DISTRACT</b>	Find something to keep your mind and hands busy.
<b>DEEP BREATHING</b>	It can help you relax and push away the urge to smoke.

## Don't give up!

Smoking is an addiction and it can be hard to quit. It's common for people to slip up. Don't give up, and don't be hard on yourself. Remember to do the following:

- **Change the situation.** Avoid or leave places that you connect with smoking.
- **Think positively.** Think about how far you've come and do your best to keep going.
- **Take action.** Do something that makes it hard to smoke. For example, chew gum, drink some water, or go for a walk.
- **Ask for help.** Talk to a friend, family member or your cancer care team.
- **Don't quit quitting.** It is possible and you can do it!

Produced in collaboration with Ontario's Regional Cancer Programs and the Canadian Cancer Society Smokers' Helpline.

Need this information in an accessible format?  
1-877-280-8538, TTY 1-800-855-0511, [info@ontariohealth.ca](mailto:info@ontariohealth.ca)  
CQ272



**Ontario Health**  
Cancer Care Ontario

# Quit Smoking

The benefits for people with cancer



# It's never too late to quit smoking!

## How you can do it

**Using both counselling and medication can triple your chance of success. Start by talking to:**

- your cancer care team, including your psychosocial counsellor
- your family doctor or nurse practitioner
- your pharmacist
- your local public health unit

Your healthcare providers can help you decide which ways to quit may be best for you.

### COUNSELLING

A counsellor can help you create a quit plan that works for you. You can meet with a quit smoking counsellor in person, by phone or online.

- Ask about quit smoking programs at your cancer treatment centre or hospital.
- Call a Quit Coach at Health811 by dialing **8-1-1** (TTY **1-866-797-0007**), or the number on cigarette packages. Getting help over the phone through a quit line can more than double your chance of quitting.
- Get support from Smokers' Helpline in the following ways:
  - Visit **SmokersHelpline.ca** to access self-help materials, and join an online group of quitters and Quit Coaches.
  - Text the word **iQuit** to the number **123456** for text message support.
  - Visit **QuitMap.ca** to find a quit smoking counsellor or group in your community.

### MEDICATIONS

The cost of nicotine replacement therapy and prescription medications may be covered by some private insurance plans and public benefit programs (i.e., the Ontario Drug Benefit program and the Non-Insured Health Benefits program for First Nations and Inuit).

You can also visit **QuitMap.ca** to see if there are programs in your community that can help you find free or low-cost medications.

### Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

- NRT comes in many forms including patches, gum, lozenges, mouth spray and inhalers.
- Using NRT can double your chance of quitting by reducing nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms.
- Combining the nicotine patch with another NRT product (gum, lozenge, spray or inhaler) can increase your chance of quitting compared with using a single product.
- NRT is sold in pharmacies and some stores. You do not need a prescription.

### Prescription medications

Two prescription drugs that do not contain nicotine are available to help reduce cravings and prevent relapse:

- Varenicline
- Bupropion

These drugs require a prescription from a doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist.



### Quitting smoking helps you feel better

- Within 20 minutes of your last cigarette, your heart rate and blood pressure will begin to improve.
- Within 2 days, your heart will be healthier.
- Within 3 months, your lung function will be better.
- In 1 year, your risk of heart disease is cut in half.

### Other ways to quit smoking

- Slowly reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke each day, also known as "reduce to quit."
- Quitting without using any medication or support, also known as "cold turkey."
- E-cigarettes or vaping might help if you find it hard to quit using the ways recommended in this brochure. Vaping products may be less harmful than smoking cigarettes, but the health risks are still unknown.
- Cytisine is a natural health product approved in Canada for smoking cessation. This product is available online and at some pharmacies.
- Alternative treatments, like acupuncture, laser therapy, hypnosis or other herbal remedies, have no research to show that they are safe or really work.