

Better You Healthy Words of Wisdom: Nicotine Dependence



Whether you're gathering information, getting ready to quit, formulating or implementing a Quit Plan, congratulations on taking the step to becoming a healthier YOU! Only you can make the commitment to stop using tobacco. So, keep an open mind and positive attitude. Believe in yourself and that change is possible. Get ready for the exciting journey of becoming tobacco free!

Did You Know?

Smoking tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death. Tobacco affects nearly EVERY organ and cell in your body, causes many diseases and reduces the quality of your health.

Nicotine is a natural but toxic substance in the tobacco plant. It's an addictive drug that interacts with your brain's chemistry to release dopamine, serotonin, beta endorphins and other chemicals that give you "feel good" sensations. The pleasure keeps you smoking. However, stopping smoking can relieve depression, anxiety and stress, and improve your overall quality of life.

The following forms of tobacco put you at risk for lung disease, cancer, heart attack, stroke and much more.

Cigarettes – One lit cigarette contains over 7,000 chemicals including nicotine, carbon monoxide, tar, arsenic and ammonia. Menthol cigarettes are some of the most harmful.

Cigars – Contrary to popular belief, cigars are NOT safer than cigarettes. One large cigar can contain as much nicotine as a pack of cigarettes, and toxic secondhand smoke can linger for several hours.

Hookah – This is a water pipe with a smoke chamber, bowl, a pipe and a hose. The use of shared mouthpieces during smoking sessions can spread infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, herpes, influenza and hepatitis.

Smokeless tobacco – This comes in either dry or moist form. These products are not safer; smokeless forms of tobacco can contain up to four times as much nicotine as a cigarette and cause cancers at similar rates produced by cigarette smoking.

Pregnant Women, Babies and Children

You wouldn't dream of giving your newborn a cigarette, but that's exactly what you're doing if you smoke while you're pregnant. The American Cancer Society reports that nicotine crosses the placenta and has been found in amniotic fluid and umbilical cord blood of newborns. This nicotine causes your blood vessels to constrict, so less oxygen and nutrients reach the fetus. Carbon monoxide also lowers the amount of oxygen your baby receives.

Smoking also increases the risk for:

- Infertility
- Placenta complications
- Premature rupture of the membranes (pre-term delivery)
- Low birth weight
- Birth defects (especially congenital heart defects)
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth

Children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to have decreased lung function, coughing, wheezing and breathlessness (asthma), middle ear infections and possible hearing loss. Infants have higher risk for sudden infant death syndrome.

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It's Never Too Late to Quit!

With all the negative effects smoking has on your body, the good news is that quitting can make a difference – within minutes! After your last cigarette, here's what happens:

- **Immediately** – The air around you becomes cleaner. You, those around and pets are safer.
- **20 minutes** – Heart rate and blood pressure drop
- **2 weeks to 3 months** – Circulation improves and lung function increases
- **1 to 9 months** – Coughing and shortness of breath decrease, as does the chance for infection
- **1 year** – Coronary heart disease risk is half that of smokers

Choose To Be Nicotine Free

Being nicotine free is a personal choice that only you can make. Believe change is possible, visualize yourself as nicotine free and say to yourself, "I will do this!"

Having a plan is crucial. Let's begin by finding out what's important to you.

Here are a few examples. Please circle or write in your top reasons.

What matters in your life?

- I will be able to breathe better
- I will have more energy to play with my kids
- I will have more money
- _____

How will your life improve once you're tobacco/nicotine free?

- My risk for lung disease and cancer will decrease
- My teeth will be whiter



- Food will taste better

• _____

How is your tobacco/nicotine usage affecting those you love?

- The second- and thirdhand smoke/vapor puts my family at risk
- I take time away from my family to go out for a smoke/vape
- Money spent on nicotine products could be used on my family

• _____

What is motivating you to become tobacco/nicotine free?

- Better health
- Family
- Money

• _____



My Quit Plan

By developing your personal quit plan, you increase your chances for success. The average smoker attempts to quit between 8 and 11 times before quitting for good. Every quit attempt you make, you learn something about yourself and your nicotine usage.

1. **Get ready:** Set a quit date.
2. **Get support:** Talk to family, friends and your health care provider. Get individual, group, telephone or online counseling.
3. **Learn new skills and behavior:** Change your routine. Go for a walk. Drink lots of water. Plan something enjoyable to do every day.
4. **Visualize yourself as a non tobacco user for life.** Say out loud, "I am nicotine free, I breathe fresh air, I feel good about myself."
5. **Get medication and use it correctly:** Use medication to help you stop smoking and lessen the urge.
 - Nicotine patch
 - Nicotine lozenge
 - Nicotine gum
 - Nicotine inhaler
 - Bupropion SR
 - Varenicline
 - Nicotine nasal spray

Counseling and medication are effective when used alone for treating tobacco dependence. However, the combination of counseling and medication is more effective than either alone. Exceptions include special populations (pregnant women, smokeless tobacco users, light smokers, adolescents and those with certain medical conditions).

6. **For relapse prevention:** Carry a form of nicotine replacement therapy such as a lozenge or gum for up to 5 years for unexpected situations. Remember you're human, and this is a process. If you have a slip or relapse, acknowledge it and learn from it. Be kind to yourself and move forward.

Cessation coaching is available through our Next Steps nurses. Call 800-477-3736, ext. 54837 or email nextsteps@floridablue.com.

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Coping with withdrawal

Use the following **4Ds** to help you cope with withdrawal symptoms.

- 1. Deep breaths**– Breathe in through your nose, inhaling deeply, and hold your breath for 10 seconds. Exhale out through your mouth. This gets oxygen moving throughout your body, helps you relax and makes cravings go away.
- 2. Drink water**– Drinking cold water helps keep your hands and mouth busy, and helps reduce cravings.
- 3. Distract**– When the urge to use tobacco hits, change your environment. Go for a brisk walk, call a friend, read a chapter in a book. These distractions can help you forget about the urge to smoke or use tobacco.
- 4. Delay**– The tobacco urge will come and go whether you use tobacco or not. Convince yourself that you can wait 10 minutes no matter how strong the craving.

Avoid Triggers

Triggers are things, places, feelings, people, etc. that remind you to use tobacco.

- **Eating:** After a meal, brush your teeth instead of having a cigarette.
- **Watching TV:** Watch different shows, limit TV time, move your chair to another location.
- **Driving:** Change your route to work, the store, etc. Your concentration will be on the new route and not on smoking.
- **Having coffee:** Drink your coffee in a tobacco free zone, hold the cup in the other hand, drink tea instead.

- **Keep your hands busy:** Try doodling or coloring. Hold a straw, toothpick or cinnamon stick. Learn to knit or crochet.
- **Alcohol:** Initially you may want to avoid alcohol. Not only is there a strong psychological association between drinking and tobacco use, but alcohol may lower your inhibitions.
- **When you're bored, nervous or stressed:** Take a walk, and practice deep breathing and relaxation techniques.

You will have urges to smoke but they'll pass in a few minutes. Take a deep breath and remember to practice the 4Ds!



So what do you think? Is it time to quit? YOU CAN DO IT!!

Believe in yourself and get ready for the exciting journey of becoming tobacco free!

Resources: www.cdc.gov; www.tobaccofreeflorida.com; www.fda.gov; www.heart.org