

# Smoking & Athero

## How Your Habit Can Increase Your Risks

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**Cigarette smoking is a risk factor for coronary heart disease (CHD) and other forms of cardiovascular disease.**

When added to other risk factors, smoking cigarettes increases the risk for atherosclerosis even more. Smoking tobacco can damage the cells that line your arteries. It can also raise your blood pressure. Either way, if you smoke, you're increasing your risks for atherosclerosis. What's more, even secondhand smoke may affect the cells that line your arteries.

### Why Quit?

More evidence shows that quitting smoking reduces the risk for cardiovascular events within a few months after quitting. If you are a smoker, try quitting immediately. It may be hard at first, so ask your doctor to suggest a smoking-cessation aid or program.

If you have tried to quit before and have been unsuccessful, try again. Many people need more than one attempt before reaching their goal.

### Treatment Options

Cigarettes contain nicotine, which is very addictive, making smoking both physically and emotionally hard to stop. Some people find it helpful to join smoking-cessation programs or support groups. These programs can provide skills to help you quit, like understanding why you smoke and how you can resist the temptation to start smoking again.

Some people also add medicines to help reduce the symptoms of withdrawal. In fact, your chances of success may be doubled if you use nicotine replacement therapy. There are currently a few different

kinds of treatment aids and medications approved to help you kick the habit. Always remember to talk with your doctor about options that may be appropriate for your particular health situation.

### Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

There are different kinds of NRTs available in the United States — patches, gum, nasal sprays, inhalers, and lozenges. A prescription is needed for nasal sprays and inhalers; the rest are available over the counter. Each one helps you quit by replacing the nicotine that was delivered by smoking.

### Other options

There are other types of medicines designed to help reduce the symptoms associated with nicotine withdrawal. Both help alleviate withdrawal symptoms by affecting the place in your brain where the nicotine has its effect. As always, talk with your doctor about which treatment option is best for you.

## The Keys to Kicking the Habit

Sometimes the key to becoming smoke-free is getting the help that you need. So give yourself the advantage of these hints, offered by the authoritative National Institutes of Health.

### Step 1: Set a Quit Date

Choose a date and mark it on your calendar. Tell your family and friends that you've decided to quit.

### Step 2: Select a Quitting Method

There is no single way to become smoke-free that is right for everyone. The trick is to find what works for you. Some people go "cold turkey" and stop smoking completely, all at once. Others call quitlines or get counseling.

### Step 3: Consider Getting Extra Help

There are medicines that may help with the feelings of withdrawal that many people get when they quit smoking. Talk to your doctor about options that may be appropriate for your particular health situation.

### Step 4: Plan for Your Quit Day

In the days before you quit, make sure you're ready.

- Stock up on oral substitutes, such as sugarless gum and carrot sticks
- Decide on what extra help you may need, and make the necessary arrangements. This may include nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) or a quit-smoking program
- Sign up for a quit-smoking support class, or get the help of a friend who has quit smoking

### Step 5: Stop Smoking on Your Quit Day

These tips can help your quit day — and all the days after you quit — to be a success.

- Get rid of all cigarettes, lighters, matches, ashtrays, and any other smoking-related items

- Be active: take a walk, exercise, or spend time at a hobby
- Drink lots of water and juices
- Begin using a nicotine replacement, if desired and approved by your doctor
- Start attending a quit-smoking class
- Avoid alcohol, or reduce your drinking, to keep your resolve strong
- Avoid situations where the urge to smoke is strong

For more information on becoming smoke-free, try these valuable resources.

### American Heart Association

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)  
7272 Greenville Avenue  
Dallas, TX 75231  
Phone: 800-242-8721

### American Cancer Society

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)  
National Center  
1599 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329  
Phone: 800-227-2345