

# Managing Cholesterol: Quitting Smoking

Quitting smoking is a lot easier said than done.

If you smoke, your healthcare provider has likely spoken with you about quitting. Maybe even several times.

That's because quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your overall health.

Quitting smoking reduces your risk of lung diseases, cancer, and diabetes.

It can also: improve your hearing and vision, protect your skin from early aging, help you lose weight, improve wound healing, strengthen your immune system, and more.

If you have high cholesterol, quitting helps decrease the buildup of plaque in your blood vessels. It can also help increase your HDL (or good) cholesterol levels—the kind that makes your body happy. This reduces your risk for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke.

If you've tried quitting before, you are not alone. Most people who smoke try many times to quit before they succeed.

The important thing is to keep trying until you can stay quit for good.

To get started, have a plan.

First, set a quit date. This is the day you will stop smoking. Give yourself time to prepare, but don't put it off longer than a week or 2.

Next, think about why you're quitting. Having a clear WHY will help you stay motivated.

Ask yourself questions like:

What do I dislike about smoking?

What do I miss out on when I smoke?

And, how will my life get better if I quit?

Then, make a plan to handle triggers and cravings. Stay away from people, places, and activities that make you want to smoke.

When a craving hits, try going for a walk, chewing gum, eating a snack, or listening to music. Find distractions that work for you. Cravings can be intense, but only last a few minutes.

Also think about how to handle nicotine withdrawal. As your body gets used to not having nicotine, you might: feel a little down; have trouble sleeping; or feel cranky, anxious, or frustrated.

One of the best ways to relieve these symptoms is to use nicotine replacement therapy.

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This means using nicotine patches or gum to help your body slowly ease off nicotine. It also comes as a nasal spray, inhaler, or lozenge. Many forms are available without a prescription. Using nicotine replacement therapy can double your chances of quitting for good.

Lastly, make sure you have support. Tell your friends and family about your plans to quit.

And consider joining a stop smoking support group, in person or online.

To chat with an expert at a quitline, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

For more information and resources about quitting smoking, visit [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov).