

Tobacco and Heart Failure: Tips for Quitting

If you use tobacco, Quit. Tobacco smoke is full of thousands of chemicals, including carbon monoxide and formaldehyde that will damage and weaken your heart and make your heart failure worse. Smoking also damages your lungs, which can increase your symptoms of heart failure, like shortness of breath and fatigue. And if you continue to use tobacco, you are at a greater risk for heart attack and stroke.

The first step in quitting using tobacco is to pick how you are going to quit. Some people are able to quit cold turkey, while others prefer to gradually smoke less and less until finally they don't need a cigarette anymore. Still others attend smoking cessation classes, get therapy, or use prescribed or over-the-counter smoking cessation aids like nicotine patches or gum to gradually quit.

Picking a quit date can be helpful. Look ahead a week or two and set the date that you will quit smoking. This is your Quit Day. Between now and your quit day, you can plan and prepare your strategy for quitting. Get rid of any cigarettes and ashtrays around the house. Also, don't replace cigarettes with other forms of tobacco like chewing tobacco or cigars, or ecigarettes!

These are also dangerous to your health. Even though it's not smoked, chewing tobacco can also raise your risk of heart attack and stroke, and e-cigarettes also contain toxic chemicals. Your healthcare provider can be a valuable ally when it comes to quitting smoking. They can recommend or prescribe stop-smoking aids to help lessen your body's need for nicotine and break the cycle of craving.

There are both prescription and over the counter nicotine replacement products. In addition to using stop smoking aids, distract yourself from the craving to use tobacco to help you stay on track.

When you feel the need for a cigarette do something healthy instead. Chew a stick of gum, have a healthy snack, or enjoy a hobby that you like to do without smoking. Try to avoid situations that make you want to smoke and start new routines that don't include smoking.

You don't have to try to quit alone. Support groups, either online or in person, can offer hope and ideas on ways to quit. If friends or members of your family smoke, ask them to not smoke around you, or even better, to quit with you.

That way you can help and support each other. And avoid secondhand smoke. It is dangerous for your heart and lungs and can trigger you to smoke again.

When trying to quit, it's easy to become frustrated. But don't get discouraged if you slip up. Most people have to quit more than once, and try different methods before they are successful. Try again. Remember, you are quitting tobacco to protect your heart health.