



Tobacco and Nicotine: A Guide to Stopping

Simple steps to help you stop using
tobacco and start feeling better

How Tobacco and Nicotine Impact Your Health





Why should I stop using tobacco?

Tobacco and nicotine can harm your body in different ways.





Nicotine is highly addictive. It changes your brain and keeps you coming back.

Tobacco products expose your body to toxic chemicals that damage your lungs, heart, and blood vessels. This damage builds over time and can lead to cancer, heart disease, stroke, and chronic lung disease.

Short-term effects:

-  Trouble breathing
-  Faster heartbeat
-  Feeling tired or low energy
-  Feeling irritable, anxious or having trouble sleeping, and nicotine cravings

Possible Long-term effects:

-  Multiple cancers (heart, lung, etc.)
-  Heart disease (including heart attack and stroke)
-  Lung disease (including chronic breathing problems)
-  Nicotine dependence

Good News!

Stopping helps your body heal almost right away.

Even small steps help.

Benefits of Stopping:

- Improved physical fitness
- Reduced risk of many serious illnesses
- Better quality of life
- Longer lifespan



Stopping Is a Process

Stopping takes time

Most people try more than once before they quit for good. That's normal. Each try helps you learn what works for you.

You can start by setting an achievable goal:

- Cut back
- Set a quit date
- Talk to your healthcare provider

You don't have to quit all at once.

These steps help you get ready to quit.



You don't have to do it alone

The best results come from:



Support (like counseling or coaching)



Medication (to help reduce cravings)

Using both together gives you the best chance at success.

Treatment Options

What can help me quit?

1. Medications

These can help reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

There are safe and proven ways to help you stop. Talk with your provider if you are interested.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT):

- Patch
- Gum
- Lozenge

Prescription options:

- Varenicline
- Bupropion



These do **not** replace one addiction with another. They help your body adjust.

2. Counseling and Support

Talking to someone helps you:

- Handle cravings
- Build new habits
- Stay on track

This can be:

- One-on-one
- Group
- Phone or online support



You are more likely to stop successfully when you use counseling and medication together.

What About Vaping or Other Tobacco?

I don't smoke cigarettes, so does this apply to me?

Yes. The same treatments used to help people quit smoking can also help you stop using vaping products and other forms of tobacco. Medications and counseling are still the best approaches to helping you stop.



Medications

- Help reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms
- May include nicotine replacement (gum, patch, lozenge) or prescription options
- Work by lowering your body's dependence on nicotine

Important:

Vaping is **not** a proven way to stop smoking tobacco.

Talk to your provider about safe options that work.

What If I'm Not Ready to Quit?

That's ok.

Help is available when you're ready, and you can begin taking small steps now.

1. Learn your triggers

Triggers are things that make you want to use tobacco or nicotine.

Common Triggers:

- Stress or emotions
- Daily routines (after meals, driving, etc.)
- Being around others who use
- Alcohol or caffeine
- Boredom

Noticing your triggers helps you prepare and stay in control.

What are your triggers?:

2. Practice cutting back

You don't have to stop all at once. Start by cutting back.

Try:

- Track how much you use each day (this helps you understand your starting point)
- Set a daily limit based on what you currently use
- Delay your first use of the day (wait 10–30 minutes longer than usual)
- Skip one routine use (for example, after meals or during a break)

Cutting back helps you understand your habits, build control, and prepare to stop.

What is one small way you could cut back?:

3. Think about your reasons to stop

Stopping is easier when you have a reason that matters to you.

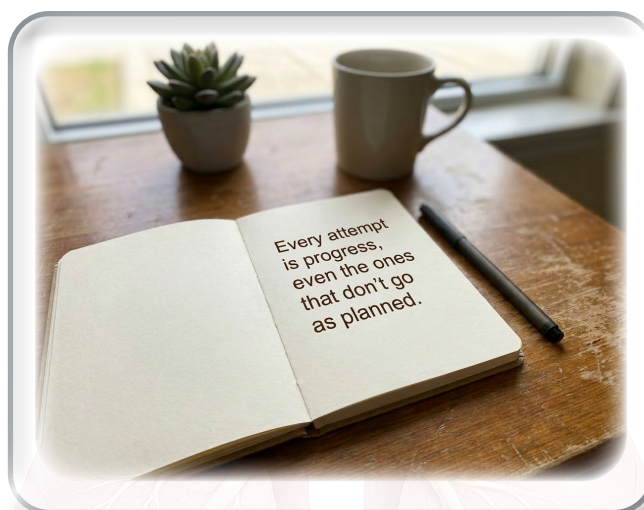
Write down 1–2 reasons and keep them where you'll see them.

My reasons:

What If I Start Again?

That's ok, small victories are still progress.

Even cutting back is a step in the right direction. This does **not** mean you failed. Stopping often takes more than one attempt and each one teaches you something.



What to do next

- Ask for more support (talk to your provider, use tobacco cessation resources, or lean on people you trust)
- Adjust your plan (change environment, goals, timing, or methods)
- Try again when you feel ready



Support and Resources

How to Quit Smoking and Other Tobacco: Veteran Resources
<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/index.asp>



How to Quit Smoking and Other Tobacco: SmokefreeVet
<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/smokefreevet.asp>



Stay Quit Coach application (iOS and Android Download Link)
<https://mobile.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach>



Become a SmokeFree Veteran
Veterans.Smokefree.gov



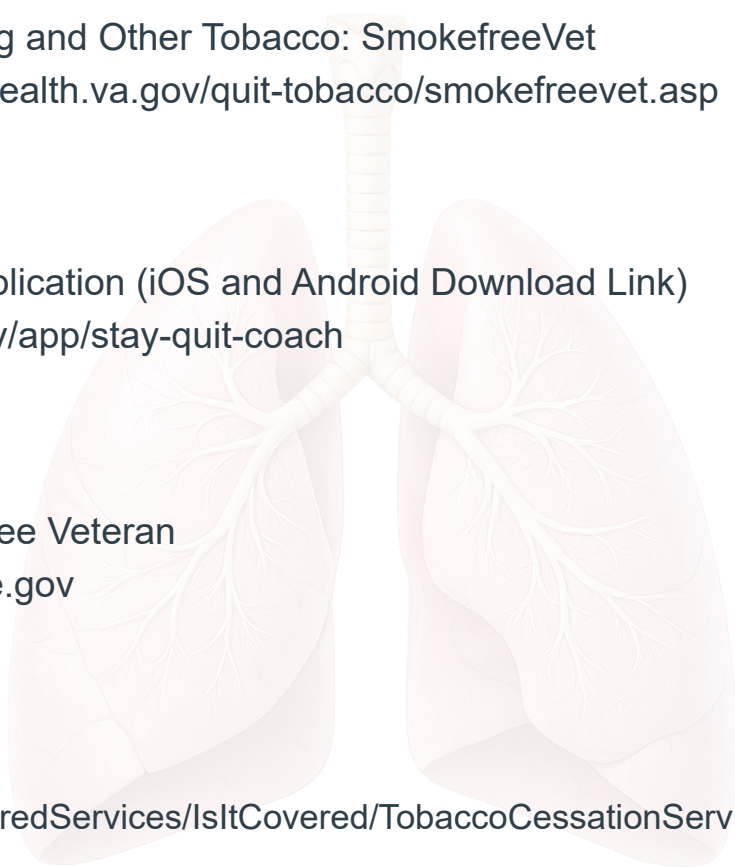
<https://tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/TobaccoCessationServices>



<https://tricare.mil/HealthWellness/Substance-Use-Disorders/Tobacco>



You Can Quit 2
<https://www.ycq2.org/>



Support and Resources



VA Quit line
1-855-QUIT-VET (784-8838)



TRICARE Tobacco and Vaping Cessation Line
1-(833)-818-2414
Text "break free" to 888-465-5435



Take the first step today

Thinking about quitting is a strong start.

When you're ready, support is here to help you take the next step.



Tobacco Cessation
Patient
Summary

