

Dealing with cravings – information for smokers

- **Remove the cue to smoking.** You may find that there are situations or moods where you want to smoke. Altering that situation may reduce the desire to smoke. This may mean changing your physical situation (for example, getting straight up after a meal, or avoiding alcohol) or it may mean changing your mood. In practice this often means finding a way of dealing with frustration or anxiety.
- **Review your reasons for stopping.** Perhaps carry a reminder of why you're stopping smoking to help you over moments of temptation. Or simply repeat to yourself the reasons for stopping that are most important to YOU.
- **Delay.** Smokers often find that if they can wait two or three minutes, the craving is less strong. Some people tell themselves that they can have a smoke in ten minutes if the craving is just as bad, but other people find this unhelpful.
- **Distract.** It's a good idea to plan some absorbing activities, especially for the first few weeks of stopping. Try to include some activities which you can do at home, at work, while travelling or in other situations where you're likely to want to smoke. Distracting yourself will also act as a delay. Some people telephone the Quitline (0800-00 22 00) to distract themselves from the craving.
- **Breathe deeply.** This can partly replace the inhalation of smoking, acts as a delay and distraction, and is relaxing – especially if you focus on relaxing your tummy so that your lungs can expand fully.
- **Relax.** Often your cue to smoking will be a situation in which you feel tense or anxious. Relaxation techniques can focus on your breathing or on muscular relaxation – there are lots of good books on simple methods. Practise your technique regularly before you stop smoking. This will help you relax more quickly and effectively when you need to. Listening to a relaxation tape can also be a pleasant way to unwind – some tapes also carry stop smoking information.
- **Give your mouth a treat.** Slowly sipping a soft drink can help you relax and make your mouth feel fresh. People tend to find cold water or juice the most helpful – coffee or tea are often associated with smoking, and also act as stimulants. Some stop-smoking plans recommend brushing your teeth whenever you feel like a smoke.
- **Exercise.** Vigorous exercise releases natural pleasure-producing substances (endorphins) in your body. And regular exercise may help counteract the weight gain which concerns many smokers. But even a brief walk away from your work situation can dispel tension and distract you from the desire for a smoke.



HELPFUL HINTS

**If you want to stop smoking, any method can help.
If you don't want to stop, no method will help**

- ⊗ Make a plan ahead of time for coping with stressful situations
- ⊗ Pick a day for stopping that will be relatively stress-free and stick to this date
- ⊗ Think positively - you can do it - concentrate on the benefits of not smoking
- ⊗ Take it one day at a time
- ⊗ Congratulate yourself frequently
- ⊗ Remove all smoking paraphernalia
- ⊗ Delay - Do something else:
Remind yourself that the urge is only temporary and will be gone in 3 to 5 minutes.
- ⊗ Deep breathing - take a few breaths, this will help to relax and the extra oxygen will increase alertness
- ⊗ Drink water when a craving comes, it will help clean the body
- ⊗ Brush your teeth
- ⊗ Play with a stress ball, blue tack, worry beads etc.
- ⊗ Keep pencil and paper beside the phone to doodle
- ⊗ Take a short break from whatever you are doing: go for a walk, talk to someone
- ⊗ Increase your level of fitness
- ⊗ Eat more fruit
- ⊗ Count the money you save and treat yourself to something special
- ⊗ Take one day at a time and build on it.