



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Helping others quit



 **Quitline** 13 7848

Helping others quit

It's difficult to watch someone you care about smoke their lives away. However, smokers need to make the decision to quit because they realise it will benefit them, not because someone else wants them to. They might stop smoking for your sake, but they won't stay stopped unless they're doing it for themselves.

This doesn't mean you can't help. Whether you are an ex-smoker, have never smoked or even smoke yourself, you can influence a smoker's behaviour and can assist them in making the decision to quit. Once they have stopped smoking, you can provide support and encouragement.



The facts

Most people know the bad news about smoking: that it leads to cancer, heart disease, emphysema, reduced circulation (sometimes resulting in gangrene and amputation), lowered fertility, pregnancy problems and premature ageing. But many people don't think about the good news of quitting.

- Much of the damage caused by smoking is reversible, and the earlier a person quits, the more chance their body has to repair itself. The longer they stay stopped, the greater their chance of avoiding a smoking-related disease.
- As soon as a person stops smoking, their body begins to recover:
 - after twelve hours almost all of the nicotine is out of their system.
 - after twenty-four hours the level of carbon monoxide in their blood has dropped dramatically. They now have more oxygen in their bloodstream.
 - after five days most nicotine by-products have gone.
 - within days their sense of taste and smell improves.
 - within a month their blood pressure returns to its normal level and more air is getting into their lungs.
 - within three months the blood flow to their hands and feet improves, and their lungs will be working better.
 - after twelve months their increased risk of dying from heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker.
- People who give up smoking often get the confidence to take on other challenges and break other damaging habits.
- Quitting smoking saves money that can be spent on other things.

The challenge is actually doing it! Next time you're talking to a downhearted smoker remember that:

- The great majority of smokers want to give up.
- The more times a person tries to quit, the more likely they are to eventually succeed.
- A person has a much better chance of staying a non-smoker if they get support while quitting.

Helping the smoker decide to quit

Your friend could do with your help if they are to become a non-smoker. But you have to offer real assistance, rather than nagging, preaching, smugness or criticism. You'll be much more helpful if you follow some of these tips.

- **If you are an ex-smoker, remember that:**
 - the reasons people have for smoking and the things that trigger their smoking differ from smoker to smoker
 - what helped you quit may not necessarily work for everyone
 - it will help to encourage the smoker to try a range of things until they find what is best for them.
- **If you are a smoker:**
 - consider the influence you may have on the smoker if you do not make changes to your smoking
 - are you willing to quit as well, or could you cut down or not smoke in front of them?
- **If you have never smoked learn about the nature of nicotine addiction, and understand that:**
 - quitting can be very difficult, especially in the early days
 - smokers often feel in two minds about their smoking.
- **Don't become involved in arguments about smoking**

Chances are that, underneath the bravado, the smoker knows as well as you do that smoking is becoming more anti-social and is bad for their health. Disagreements only make smokers more defensive and more likely to insist on their right to keep on smoking.



- **Show that you care**

Nagging achieves little and often results in both parties feeling angry. Express your opinion clearly and simply, in a way that shows that you care: don't just carry on about what they should be doing.

- **Show your friend a better way**

How do you deal with your stress, boredom, good and bad feelings, minus the aid of cigarettes? Does your lifestyle provide an image of a non-smoker that would appeal to your smoking friend?

- **Let your friend know – tactfully – that there are self-help materials and organisations that can give support to people trying to quit**

One way to do this is to find someone who has used these methods to help them quit, and introduce them to your friend. Let them know – if they ask, or are talking about how they should give up smoking – that they can call the Quitline on 13 7848 for advice, information or a free quit kit.

Help for people trying to quit

Encourage them to call the Quitline on 13 7848.

The Quitline is a telephone service that provides information and support to help with planning to quit, dealing with difficult times and staying a non-smoker. Callers can order a quit kit or talk with a counsellor. Quitting information is also available in different languages and callers requiring an interpreter can access a counsellor by selecting an option connecting them to the Translating and Interpreter Service.

Information, advice and support to quit smoking and staying a non-smoker is also available online at **www.quitnow.gov.au**

Many doctors, pharmacists and other health practitioners can give advice on quitting smoking, including information on quitting products.



Once the smoker has decided to quit

Whether a smoker succeeds in quitting has a lot to do with how the people around them react to the decision. Some people will support them – others will, consciously or subconsciously, work to undermine that person's plan to become a non-smoker. Smokers aren't the only saboteurs. If you want to make sure you're helping, not hindering, follow these tips.

- **Provide support, understanding and encouragement – even if your quitting friend slips up**

Sometimes smokers slip up and smoke a couple of cigarettes even though they are trying to quit. There are many reasons why this happens. The smoker may not have prepared for how to deal with all their usual smoking situations, they might have decided it's OK to have 'just one', or they may have difficulty thinking of themselves as a non-smoker.

If your friend slips-up, encourage them to put it behind them and focus on the reason why they quit. If your friend goes back to full-time smoking, remember that most smokers make several attempts before they are able to stop completely.

Every attempt is a step in the right direction and will make it easier for them to stop next time around. Criticism, on the other hand, is counterproductive: it just makes the smoker fearful of being judged and less likely to try again.

- **Help your friend to follow through with quitting strategies he or she has planned**

What sort of support do you think your friend wants you to provide? Perhaps you can support the smoker when they go out. If they have decided to avoid tempting situations, such as pubs or parties, suggest some alternative activities that you could enjoy together (such as going out to a smoke free restaurant, a play or a film); if they have decided to take up exercise and need encouragement, offer to go along too.

- **Be around**

Sometimes, a person who's trying not to smoke just needs someone to talk to.



This document can be made available
in alternative formats on request for
a person with a disability.

Produced with assistance from Quit Victoria.

Produced by Tobacco Policy Section
© Department of Health Western Australia 2013