

# stopping smoking

made easier

- **CHECKLIST**  
Do you really want to stop?
- **WILLPOWER**  
You have more than you think
- **NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY AND NON-NICOTINE PRODUCTS**  
Which one is for you?
- **HELP AND ADVICE**  
Who to contact for support



Research shows that smokers who use licensed nicotine replacement therapy and receive specialist stop smoking support are four times more likely to quit smoking for good.

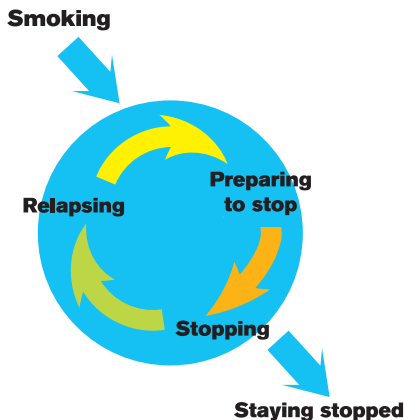
West R, Shiffman S. Fast facts – smoking cessation. Oxford: Health Press Limited, 2004.

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Stopping smoking isn't easy but it can help to think of doing it in stages. This booklet takes you through the stages of stopping smoking. It will help you make up your mind, prepare to stop, stop smoking and stay stopped. It also answers the most common questions smokers ask about stopping.

If you follow the stages carefully and use the ideas and advice in the booklet, you will stop smoking. If you don't stay stopped, don't worry - most smokers make several attempts before they stop for good. Go back to stage one and start again.





## Do you really want to stop?

One of the keys to success is wanting to stop. The following checklist identifies some of the reasons why smokers want to stop. Tick your reasons for stopping and try to add some more of your own. This is your checklist. Keep it handy over the next few weeks.

- I want to feel better.
- I don't want my children to become smokers.
- I don't want to feel out of breath.
- I could do with the money for other things.
- It smells, makes the house dirty, and clings to clothes.
- I want my breath to smell fresh.
- I don't want premature wrinkles.
- It's not fair to the people I live with.
- I'm afraid of developing a serious illness/condition (heart disease, lung cancer, stroke, severe sight loss etc).
- It's anti-social.
- I don't like being addicted.
- I want to live to see my children grow up.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Get ready

To be really ready to stop you need to think carefully about why you're still smoking. Look at the list on page 2. Do any of the following apply to you?

## Smoking helps me cope with stress

This is a myth. Nicotine is a stimulant and only seems to make you feel calm because you are addicted to it. When your nicotine level falls you feel edgy because of withdrawal effects. Smoking boosts your nicotine level and this relieves the withdrawal, making you feel less stressed. What feels like stress is actually caused by craving nicotine.

## I'm worried about withdrawal symptoms

When you stop smoking you are withdrawing from nicotine and from a powerful habit. It takes time to clear the drug from the body and break the habit. You may get irritated and find it difficult to concentrate but these symptoms don't last more than a few weeks. Licensed nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) or non-nicotine treatments can help you through this stage. See pages 8–11 for more information.

## I don't want to put on weight

You may put on weight but weight gain can be avoided by healthy eating and keeping active.

## It's too late - the damage is probably done

The risk from smoking builds up, so the sooner you stop the better. Within weeks you will be breathing more easily and the risk of serious smoking-related disease starts going down immediately. A full range of health benefits associated with stopping smoking is available on [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)



## This isn't the right time

There are times when it may be harder to stop - for example when you're under pressure. But it's easy to use this as an excuse not to stop and it might help to keep focusing on the reasons why you want to give up.

## I haven't got the willpower

Willpower is not fixed. It's like muscle power - you can build it up. Willpower just means wanting something badly enough.

If you're ready to stop smoking read on.

If you're not ready, have a break and try again at a later date.  
Keep this booklet and use it when you feel ready.



## Getting through the first few days

Smoking is strongly linked to certain times and situations - the first smoke of the day, out socialising with friends who smoke, drinking tea or coffee. To break the link between the situation and smoking, change your habits. For example:

- If you have a cigarette first thing in the morning, get up and have a shower instead.
- If you like a cigarette with a cup of tea or coffee, change your drink to milk, water or some other soft drink (without added sugar).
- If you enjoy a cigarette after a meal, try cleaning your teeth or chewing sugar-free gum after eating.
- Socialising with smokers is often difficult when you're trying to give up, so it may be better to avoid such situations for the first few weeks.

## Be prepared

- Identify situations that will be difficult and plan how you'll cope. Don't wait for them to happen.
- If you miss having a cigarette in your mouth, try sugar-free chewing gum, or something healthy and non-fattening.

- If you're used to having a cigarette in your hands, find something else to fiddle with. Anything but a cigarette.
- Be careful when drinking alcohol - a few drinks can make you forget you've given up smoking.
- Try eating fruit when you feel like having a cigarette. This will freshen your mouth and hopefully lower your craving.
- Licensed NRT or non-nicotine treatments can at least double your chances of stopping. See pages 8–11 for more information about these aids to stopping.
- Taking licensed NRT **and** getting specialist stop smoking support quadruples your chances of quitting. For information on a free specialist stop smoking service near you, visit [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)

## Take one day at a time

It's a cliché but it works. Make it your goal to get through today without smoking. It's easier to do this each morning rather than worry about how you'll manage without cigarettes for the rest of your life.

## Treat yourself

Think what else you could do with the money you spend on cigarettes - take the family to the cinema, have a night out, or buy something new to wear. Use the table below to work out how much you would save if you stopped smoking.

Cigarettes per day	24 hours/ 1 day	1 week	1 month	1 year	5 years
5	£3.96	£27.72	£118.80	£1,445.40	£7,227.00
10	£7.92	£55.44	£237.60	£2,890.80	£14,454.00
20	£15.84	£110.88	£475.20	£5,781.60	£28,908.00
30	£23.76	£166.32	£712.80	£8,672.40	£43,362.00
40	£31.68	£221.76	£950.40	£11,563.20	£57,816.00

Based on £15.84 for a pack of 20 cigarettes



The following advice aims to help you stay stopped.

## Do:

- Stay positive. There will be times when you feel tired and tempted to give in - if you feel tempted remember how far you've come and why you stopped. If you stay determined, the temptation will pass.
- Keep busy. Boredom can make smoking seem more important to you than it really is.
- Learn to relax and deal with stress. Try to make sure you get some peace and quiet for yourself every day - even just five minutes of deep breathing will help.
- Take some exercise. Even a short walk will give you energy and take your mind off cigarettes.
- Give yourself a reward. Spend some of the money you've saved on a treat for getting this far.
- Be careful when drinking alcohol - it can affect your willpower.
- Take care. After the first few weeks, especially if you found it easy to stop, people may stop encouraging you and even forget you're stopping. Keep determined and don't be complacent or allow yourself to be tempted.

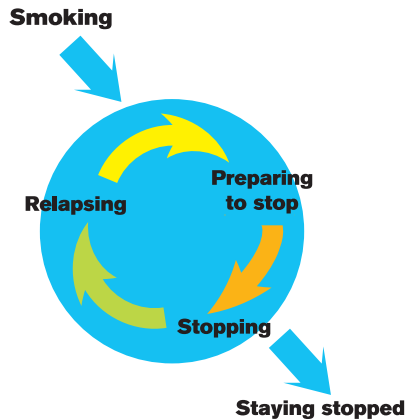


## Don't:

- Don't play games. A favourite is 'one cigarette won't hurt', or 'I'll just have one to prove I've kicked it'. Recognise these games for what they are - just excuses to have a cigarette - don't give in.
- Don't let friends who smoke tempt you to join them.

## What if I've had a cigarette?

It's not the end of the world. Many smokers are caught in the 'revolving door' of smoking and stopping smoking before eventually breaking free. Have a break, and when you're ready, try again.



## How long does it take to become an ex-smoker?

When you first stop smoking, you still think of yourself as a smoker. During nicotine withdrawal, which may feel like stress, your automatic reaction is still to reach for a cigarette. But, in time, your mind 'catches up' and this reaction stops. Usually it takes about three months. It is quite rare for the craving to last much longer than this.

## A new life

When you haven't smoked for a few months and are feeling ready, you could look at other parts of your lifestyle (maybe your eating or exercise habits). Stopping smoking could be the beginning of a new, more confident, healthier you!

## Save money and feel better

The cost of smoking is very high. Here are a few examples of the health and financial benefits if you quit.

<b>Time since quitting</b>	<b>Health benefits</b>	<b>Money saved*</b>
20 minutes	Your heart rate drops	79p
8 hours	Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in your blood reduce by half	£5.28
24 hours	Carbon monoxide and nicotine are cleared from your body	£15.84
48 hours	Your ability to taste and smell is improved	£31.68
2-12 weeks	Circulation improves and your lung function increases	£221.76–£1,330.56
1 year	Your risk of having a heart attack falls to half that of a smoker	£5,781.60
5 years	Stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker, in most cases	£28,908.00
10 years	Your risk of dying from lung cancer is about half that of a smoker	£57,816.00
15 years	Your risk of having a heart attack falls to that of a non-smoker	£86,724.00

\* Based on a 20-per-day smoker at an average price of £15.84 for 20 cigarettes.

# Licensed nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

Licensed NRT really does work. You can try nicotine chewing gum, patches, inhalator, sprays, tablets, oral strips or lozenges.

All these products have been scientifically tested and the results show they **double your chances** of stopping.

Smokers who avail of specialist stop smoking services can benefit greatly from this support and the provision of licensed NRT. Evidence shows that patients who use licensed NRT and receive specialist stop smoking support quadruple their chances of successfully quitting.<sup>1</sup>

Licensed NRT may be available FREE if you register for one of the free stop smoking services. Visit [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info) for more information. It can also be bought over the counter from your pharmacist and is also [available on prescription](#). Ask your pharmacist, stop smoking specialist or GP for advice about the best licensed NRT for you.

## How does licensed NRT work?

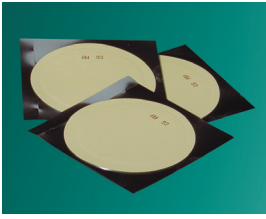
Licensed NRT works by getting nicotine into your system without the tar, carbon monoxide and other poisonous chemicals you get from tobacco smoke. It is these chemicals in tobacco that are most harmful, not the nicotine. But it's the nicotine that is addictive. So while you're becoming a non-smoker, you can still get nicotine from licensed NRT without the risk of cancer or heart disease. Once you're comfortable not smoking, you can cut out the NRT, gradually if necessary.

## Is licensed NRT safe?

Licensed NRT is much safer and less addictive than cigarettes. It's not a magic cure, but it will reduce the withdrawal symptoms and cravings while you're stopping.

It's important to remember that licensed NRT isn't meant to feel the same as smoking - it's meant to help you stop.

<sup>1</sup> West R, Shiffman S. Fast facts – smoking cessation. Oxford: Health Press Limited, 2004.



## Nicotine patches

These are available in different doses. The instructions will provide information on which strength is most suitable to begin with. They are extremely convenient but you can't quickly alter the dose - say, to get more nicotine quickly when the craving is particularly strong.



## Nicotine gum

You can chew this gum whenever you feel a craving. Nicotine is absorbed into the bloodstream from the lining of the mouth. Try the 2mg first, then if you still experience severe craving and withdrawal try the stronger gum. Nicotine gum is available in a range of flavours. The taste may seem strange at first but for most people this only lasts a week or so. You should read the instructions on how to chew the gum correctly to obtain the greatest benefit.



## Nicotine inhalator

This is a plastic holder with nicotine cartridges that you put on the end. Draw on it like a cigarette and nicotine passes into the mouth.



## Nicotine nasal spray

This is nicotine solution, which you spray up your nose. You can absorb nicotine quicker through the nose than with the gum or patch, but it takes more getting used to, and can irritate the nose.



## Nicotine tablets

Placing small tablets under the tongue allows nicotine to be absorbed through the lining of the mouth. These tablets should not be chewed or swallowed.



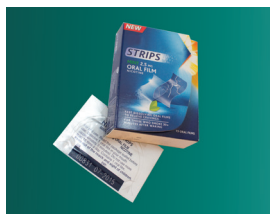
## Nicotine lozenges

As with tablets, the nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth.



## Nicotine mouth spray

This is available as a small pocket-sized container. The nicotine is quickly absorbed into the body through the lining of the mouth, rapidly relieving the urge to smoke before you act on it.



## Oral strips

These dissolve on the roof of your mouth and release nicotine fast, with a fresh, minty flavour. They fully dissolve in approximately three minutes, providing quick, discreet relief. This product is recommended for light smokers who smoke their first cigarette 30 minutes or more after waking.

If you want to talk to someone face-to-face about licensed NRT, ask at your local GP practice, community pharmacist or stop smoking service. You can find your nearest service on **[www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)**



If you are pregnant, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or midwife about licensed NRT and pick up a copy of the leaflet *Pregnancy and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): what you need to know*. A short course of licensed NRT is safer for you and your baby than continuing to smoke.

# If licensed NRT doesn't work

If licensed NRT has failed in the past, there are other options. Your GP can prescribe one of two non-nicotine medications that may help your quit attempt – varenicline and bupropion. Varenicline works on the brain by reducing the strength of the smoker's urge to smoke and relieving withdrawal symptoms. Scientific tests show that smokers who use varenicline are three times more likely to make a successful quit attempt. Bupropion is used with motivational support and works in the brain to help break the addiction to nicotine. It reduces the cravings for cigarettes and the withdrawal symptoms associated with quitting.

Research has shown that varenicline is more successful at helping people quit and has fewer side effects than bupropion. Because of this, Health and Social Care-funded services in Northern Ireland are advised to consider varenicline before bupropion when an alternative to NRT is required.\* This will depend on your own individual case as not all medications are suitable for everyone. You should discuss this with your GP or stop smoking service provider.

\*Northern Ireland Formulary 2012

## E-cigarettes

At this point, for smokers, e-cigarettes appear to be a safer option than smoking, but they are not licensed as medication and the short and long-term effects of using e-cigarettes are not yet known. They are therefore not as safe as well-established, licensed NRT products like nicotine patches and gum, which are tightly controlled for quality and safety. While the Public Health Agency considers e-cigarettes with caution at this time, if **you choose** to use e-cigarettes as a means of stopping smoking, we would advise that you seek the support of a stop smoking service, as this will increase your chances of quitting for good – details of over 550 free local services and other information can be found at [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)

The safest and most effective way to stop is with the support of a stop smoking service who can provide regulated, licensed nicotine replacement therapy.

# Where to get help and advice



More than 550 free stop smoking services are available across Northern Ireland. Most of these services provide licensed NRT and are run by specially trained staff who can advise you on the best way to stop smoking. Services are offered in many GP practices, community pharmacies, Health and Social Care Trust premises, community and voluntary organisations. For more information on stop smoking services near you, visit [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info) and click on the interactive map.

The website [www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info) also gives you the facts about smoking, highlights the benefits of quitting and identifies the challenges you might face. It also includes case studies of local people who have successfully stopped smoking to give you tips and inspiration.





For help on stopping smoking visit  
**[www.stopsmokingni.info](http://www.stopsmokingni.info)**



Public Health  
Agency

**Public Health Agency**

12-22 Linenhall Street, Belfast BT2 8BS.

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[www.publichealth.hscni.net](http://www.publichealth.hscni.net)

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