



STEPS TO STOP SMOKING FROM THE ALA

Introduction

The American Lung Association developed the *Quit Smoking Action Plan* under the guidance of a team of experts on cigarette smoking. It offers specific recommendations for selecting a personalized *plan* to free yourself of cigarettes and stay that way.

To help you better understand your options, the material is presented in the following 3 Steps of a *Quit Smoking Action Plan*, along with charts to guide you through each step.

STEP #1: Preparing to Quit

What You Need to Do

1. Identify your personal reasons for quitting.
2. Set a quit date, usually within 10 days to several weeks. If you smoke mostly at work, try quitting on a weekend. If you smoke mostly when relaxing or socializing, quit on a week day.
3. Identify your barriers to quitting (such as your spouse smokes or you've relapsed before due to depression or weight gain). You'll find sources of help in this booklet to overcome these barriers.
4. Make SPECIFIC plans AHEAD OF TIME for dealing with temptations. Identify two or three coping strategies that work for you (such as taking a walk or calling a friend).
5. Get cooperation from family and friends. They can't quit for you but they can help by not smoking around you, providing a sympathetic ear and encouragement when you need it and leaving you alone when you need some space.

STEP #2: Using Medications

What You Need To Know

When you smoke a cigarette, a high concentration of nicotine enters your body rapidly and travels to your brain. Nicotine medications provide you with a safer alternative source of nicotine that enters the body less rapidly and in a lower concentration than cigarettes. There is much unfounded concern about the safety of nicotine medications even though they have been extensively tested and used by millions of people. Unlike cigarettes, which contain thousands of harmful chemicals, nicotine medications contain small doses of nicotine alone to combat cravings and urges to smoke.

To optimize your chances of success, generally medications should be a component of your *Quit Smoking Action Plan*. However, not everyone who decides to quit smoking will want or need to use them. Depending on the medication you use, you may need a prescription. As with any medication, consult the package directions or your pharmacist before using. If you are pregnant, consult your physician; if you are taking other medications, consult the doctor who prescribed them or your pharmacist.

Your goal in using nicotine medication is to stop smoking completely. If you plan to take nicotine medications, begin using them on your quit day. If you continue to have strong urges to

smoke or are struggling to stop smoking completely, ask your healthcare provider about additional help.

If you take the non-nicotine medication, it should be started about 7-10 days before your target quit date.

Other Tips for Using Medications:

- Ask your physician or pharmacist for advice if you are uncertain about which medication to use.
- Learn to use the medication you choose (examples: apply patches properly, use nicotine gum, nasal spray or inhaler as recommended on package labeling).
- Many experts believe nicotine medications are often taken for too short a time to be of full benefit to users. For this reason, your healthcare provider may advise you to use your medication for a longer period of time or in combination with another medication. However, if you take these medications on your own, do not deviate from package directions.

STEP #3: Staying Smoke-Free

What You Need To Remember

After quitting and getting through the first couple of weeks, staying off cigarettes is critical—and not always easy. Research indicates that continued support and encouragement from health providers, family, friends and other sources are extremely helpful. Your friends and family won't automatically know how to encourage you. Talk to them ahead of time about what they can do. Also, think about who you want to give you encouragement—someone who will stay positive even if you have some problems along the way.

The average person makes two to four attempts at quitting before they are able to stay smoke-free. If you return to smoking, it doesn't mean you can't quit. It just means you need to try again by figuring out what caused you to slip and improving your plan for next time. You may want to use medications this time if you have tried to quit without them in the past. Or you may want to try a different group, individual counselor or other source of help if you've been unsuccessful at quitting on your own.

Some smokers wrongly believe they can reduce their health risks and continue to smoke by substituting other forms of tobacco. Low tar/nicotine cigarettes are not safer than cigarettes, nor do they reduce your risk of smoking-related disease. Smokeless tobacco, pipes and cigars also are not safe.

Additional American Lung Association Resources

Call your local American Lung Association at 1-800-LUNG-USA (1-800-586-4872) to find out more about how to stop smoking for good. The Lung Association is offering a new way to stop smoking through its [Freedom From Smoking®](#) online smoking cessation clinic. The program is based on the Lung Association's Freedom From Smoking® program, which has already helped thousands of smokers quit smoking for good. The [Freedom From Smoking®](#) online smoking cessation clinic can be accessed day or night, seven days a week, on any schedule a smoker chooses.

Visit www.ffsonline.org and stop smoking today!