

Smoking cessation

The Health Column

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Did you know that every 28 minutes an Australian dies of smoking-related disease?

The number of Australians who smoke has fallen in recent years. However, smoking is still a big problem. Around 1 in 8 or approximately 13% of adults in Australia still smoke. This affects their health, as well as the health of those around them.



Smoking increases the risk of many chronic diseases including coronary artery disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, rheumatoid arthritis and osteoporosis, as well as several forms of cancer. Tobacco smoking is a leading cause of preventable disease across the globe, and is the main cause of premature death in Australia. Illnesses caused by tobacco smoke are still thought to be responsible for approximately 15,000 deaths in Australia every year.

Smoking also affects people in the community who don't smoke. There is no safe limit of exposure to tobacco smoke. Non-smokers can be affected by tobacco smoke, as a result of passive smoking. Passive smoking is associated with harmful health effects, particularly in children and unborn babies of pregnant women who smoke.

Quitting smoking has health benefits at any age. Quitting reduces the risk of developing cancer, heart and airway diseases, and slows the progression of these diseases even if they have already developed. Fifteen years after quitting, an ex-smoker's risk of stroke or heart attack is similar to a person who has never smoked. Smokers who quit before the age of 35 years can avoid almost any excess risk of developing smoking-related diseases.

There are many approaches people can take to stop smoking. Many people try and quit 'cold turkey'. Although this works for some, many people need to use nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to help them quit. If you are ready to quit, NRT may increase your chance of success by up to 70%. NRT products are available in many forms, including patches, gum, inhalers, sprays, films and lozenges. You can also talk to your doctor about prescription medicines to help you quit. It is important that you seek advice from your pharmacist or doctor if you:

- are pregnant or breastfeeding
- have other medical conditions

- have tried to quit several times without success.

There are many other things you can do to help you quit. Prepare to quit by trying to reduce the number of cigarettes you smoke per day. Set a quit date, and make a plan for dealing with or avoiding triggers that make you want to smoke (e.g. stress, coffee breaks, drinking alcohol, stressful situations) and remove anything that reminds you of smoking (e.g. cigarettes, lighters, ashtrays). Ask friends and family to support you in your quit attempt by not smoking around you.

Quitting can be hard. Many people require several attempts before they are able to stop smoking, and stay a non-smoker. However, your local pharmacy can help. Pharmacies stock a range of NRT products, and offer tailored advice to help you decide which approach will suit you best. Many pharmacies also offer smoking cessation programs that provide support to help you quit, and stay a non-smoker.

You can get more information about quitting smoking from the Self Care Fact Cards *Smoking*, *Nicotine replacement therapy* and *Staying a non-smoker* available from pharmacies providing the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Self Care health information.

For the nearest Self Care pharmacy location phone the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia on 1300 369 772, or go to www.psa.org.au 'Supporting practice' then 'Self Care', and then 'Find a Self Care pharmacy'.