

Quitting and staying quit

The Health Column

25 May
2016

Tobacco smoking is the largest single preventable cause of death and disease in Australia. Smoking damages nearly every organ in your body and causes about 15,000 deaths a year in Australia.

Smoking increases your risk of developing a stroke, and heart and blood vessel disease. It damages your lungs, and increases your risk of lung cancer as well as cancers of the lips, tongue, mouth, throat, bladder, and pancreas. The damage caused by smoking starts with the first cigarette and continues for as long as you smoke.

Smoking can also cause damage to other people through passive smoking, which is breathing in of another person's breathed out tobacco smoke. Children are particularly at risk of serious health effects from this 'second-hand' smoke. Unborn babies of mothers who smoke or passively smoke are at risk of developing birth defects.

Quitting smoking is vital though may not be very easy. Nicotine, one of the chemicals in tobacco, is very addictive and makes you want to smoke. This makes quitting very difficult, but not impossible. It may take a few attempts at quitting smoking before you are successful. To help in quitting and staying motivated, there are courses in quitting smoking as well as counselling and telephone support services. Don't forget to ask friends and family to support you by not smoking around you.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products can also be useful when you are trying to quit smoking. They provide nicotine to reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms that many people get when they try to stop smoking. Using NRT can increase the chances of successful quitting. A pharmacist can advise on correct use of NRT.

To help you stay quit, try avoiding situations that tempt you to smoke. Don't be around other people who are smoking at work, during coffee and lunch breaks or when drinking alcohol. If you smoke when you are stressed, try using relaxation techniques. Also remove things that remind you of smoking such as cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays.

When you get the urge to smoke, remember the 4Ds:

- **Delay** acting on the urge to smoke. After a few minutes the urge will weaken.



- **Deep** breathe. Take a slow, deep breath in and out. Do this three times.
- **Drink** water slowly.
- **Do** something else to take your mind off smoking such as exercise.

This year, May 31 is World Tobacco Day. It calls for countries to get ready for plain packaging on cigarette packets. Plain packaging is a way of reducing the attractiveness of tobacco products. It highlights the dangers of smoking through pictures and delivers simple antismoking messages. Plain packaging is a very effective way of telling the public about cigarette health warnings.

Want to know more about quitting smoking and staying a non-smoker? Talk with your local pharmacist. They are medicine and health information experts. They can assist you with quitting smoking, nicotine replacement therapy and provide you with current information on how to quit and stay quit.

For more information, you can get Self Care Fact Cards on *Nicotine replacement therapy Smoking and Staying a non-smoker* from pharmacies that provide the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's (PSA) 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'.

References:

SCFC Smoking and Nicotine replacement therapy

<http://www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/en/>

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/smoking-statistics>

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/smoking-effects-on-your-body>

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/smoking-quitting-tips>