

# Know Your Risk Factors

## SMOKING



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**Smoking cigarettes is the most preventable major risk factor of our No. 1 killer** — heart and blood vessel diseases. The long list of diseases and deaths due to smoking is frightening. Thousands of nonsmokers, including infants and children, are harmed by exposure to cigarette smoke. Even if you don't smoke, you could become one of the nearly 440,000 smoking-related deaths every year.

It's never too late to quit! No matter how much or how long you've smoked or when you quit smoking, your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop. In time your risk will be about the same as if you'd never smoked.

Quitting smoking isn't easy, but it's worth it! Quitting will drastically reduce your risk of developing heart and blood vessel diseases — diseases that kill someone every 37 seconds. It will also lower your chance of having lung disease and cancer. Most of all, quitting can save your life and the lives of nonsmokers around you.

## HOW TO QUIT SMOKING

### STEP ONE

- **List your reasons** to quit and read them several times a day.
- **Wrap your cigarette pack** with paper and rubber bands. Each time you smoke, write down the time of day, how you feel, and how important that cigarette is to you on a scale of 1 to 5.
- **Rewrap the pack.**

### STEP TWO

- **Keep reading your list** of reasons and add to it if you can.
- **Don't carry matches**, and keep your cigarettes out of easy reach.
- **Each day, try to smoke fewer cigarettes.** Only smoke when you really, really want to.

### STEP THREE

- **Continue with Step Two.** Set a target date to quit.
- **Don't buy a new pack** until you finish the one you're smoking.
- **During the week, change twice to brands you don't like** to make smoking less pleasant.
- **Try to stop for 48 hours** at one time.

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#### STEP FOUR

- **Quit smoking completely.** Throw out all your cigarettes and matches. Hide the lighters and ashtrays.
- **Stay busy!** Go to the movies, exercise, take long walks, go bike riding.
- **Avoid situations** and “triggers” you relate with smoking.
- **Try doing crafts** or other things with your hands.
- **Do deep breathing** exercises when you get the urge to smoke.

#### BENEFITS OF QUITTING

- Your senses of smell and taste come back.
- A smoker's cough will go away.
- You digest normally.
- You feel alive and full of energy.
- You breathe much easier.
- It's easier to climb stairs.
- You're free from the mess, smell and burns in clothing.
- You feel free of “needing” cigarettes.
- You'll live longer and have less chance of heart disease, stroke, lung disease and cancer.

#### PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HELPS!

Walking and other exercise releases stress and calms you and keeps your mind off cigarettes. Sign up for Go Red BetterU, the American Heart Association's free 12-week program that can help you transform your health with small, simple choices such as changing eating habits, getting regular exercise and managing cholesterol and blood pressure. Go Red BetterU is not about fad diets and new exercise trends, but rather a program that focuses on skills and information that help today's busy women lead their own lives, only better. To find out more, visit [GoRedForWomen.org/BetterU](http://GoRedForWomen.org/BetterU).

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Talk to your doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional to learn more about how smoking affects your health and how you can quit.

[GoRedForWomen.org](http://GoRedForWomen.org)

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