

HIV & Tobacco

Realistic strategies to reduce your smoking - and kick butts!



Vaping, or e-cigarettes removes the tobacco and toxic substances found in cigarettes and can be a more healthy way to reduce your smoking.

The Facts

- 12.8% of the Australian public smoke daily (AIHW 2014) while over 24% of people living with HIV smoke daily (Futures 8).
- The benefits of quitting smoking starts within hours!
- Stopping smoking is one of the main modifiable risk factors for heart disease.
- Cutting down or switching to vaping can make a difference to your health.
- Your wallet will feel the difference as well as your body: a pack a day = \$24 or over \$8,700 per year.
- Even if it takes a few attempts to quit, each time means you've made progress.
- In today's environment of improved treatment options, PLHIV who smoke risk losing more from smoking than from HIV.

The Effects

- Smoking can interfere with normal lung function, as well as the processing of medication by your liver.
- Smoking damages your blood vessel walls and reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood. It increases your risk of heart attack, stroke and peripheral artery disease. Sometimes this can lead to gangrene and amputation of limbs.
- Smoking weakens your immune system and can make it more difficult to fight off infection.
- Smoking tobacco when you live with HIV has harmful multiplied effects on your health.



Nicotine patches can be a strategy to reduce your smoking. While you can still get cravings, patches help take the edge off and support your decision to quit smoking.

Ways to quit

Quitting smoking doesn't have to mean going "cold turkey" (stopping suddenly). There are different ways to gradually reduce your smoking or stop smoking. Different strategies work better for different people.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) comes in a range of different patches, chewing gum, lozenges, tablets and inhalers. These are available from pharmacies and cost around the same as you would spend on a pack of cigarettes. NRT products are safer than cigarettes because they don't have the chemicals found in tobacco smoke. Patches provide a steady release of nicotine through your skin, while other products release nicotine orally (by mouth) when you have the most cravings. Check with your doctor if nicotine replacement therapy is suitable for you.

Prescription medication is designed to help stop smoking as part of an overall quit smoking plan, along with professional help and other quit smoking strategies. Two medications, Bupropion (Zyban®) and Varenicline (Champix®) are subsidised under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) for a limited time and may require joining a support program. Prescription medication might not be for everyone, particularly if you have existing anxiety, depression and/or other mental health conditions. There have been a range of side-effects reported such as dry mouth, nausea, and insomnia (problems with sleeping). Discuss with your doctor if prescription medication is suitable for you.

NSW Quitline on 13 78 48 is a quit support program which offers structure and support to help you to quit smoking. www.icanquit.com.au

Handy Tips

- Talk to your mates about your goal to quit smoking. Ask them to avoid offering you cigarettes or situations where you might be tempted to smoke.
- Be prepared for nicotine withdrawal symptoms. You can experience irritation, bad moods and depression.
- As soon as the desire to light up a cigarette strikes you, drink a glass of water or eat a healthy snack.
- Yoga, meditation or hypnotherapy may help to strengthen your willpower.
- An exercise schedule can help to help you feel motivated.
- A deep sleep each night is a way to keep your willpower strong and motivation up.
- Smoking is one of the hardest habits to kick. Keep your decision firm that you want to and absolutely have to quit smoking. Renew and reaffirm it each day.

For more information phone 02 9206 2177 or 1800 245 677 (freecall) or visit www.positivelife.org.au

Updated October 2020

The voice of all people living with HIV

Positive Life NSW