

HIV & Tobacco

Realistic strategies to reduce your smoking - and kick butts!



While vaping, or e-cigarettes removes the tar found in cigarettes and may have fewer toxic chemicals, [the evidence suggests that regular use of e-cigarettes is likely to have adverse health consequences.](#)

The Facts

- In today's environment of improved HIV treatment options, people living with HIV who smoke will experience more health risks from smoking, than from HIV.
- 14.5% of the Australian public smoke daily while over 18% of people living with HIV smoke daily ([Futures 9](#)).
- The benefits of quitting smoking starts within hours!
- Stopping smoking is one of the main modifiable risk factors for heart disease.
- Cutting down can make a difference to your health.
- Your wallet will feel the difference as well as your body: a pack a day = \$41 or over \$14,900 per year.
- Even if it takes a few attempts to quit, each time means you've made progress.

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 you have to go "cold turkey" (stop suddenly). There are other ways to gradually reduce your smoking and 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. 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

My QuitBuddy app is a free mobile phone app designed to support and encourage you to quit smoking. It lets you set personal goals, track your progress and see how much money you've saved. The app offers alerts and other support messages help keep you on track.

www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/my-quitbuddy-app

QuitCoach is a free personalised quitting plan based on your responses to questions about your motivation, confidence and past attempts.

www.quitcoach.org.au

For more information phone 02 8357 8386 or 1800 245 677 (freecall) or visit www.positivelife.org.au

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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, acupuncture, 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.