

Quitting and staying quit

The Health Column

Make every day World No Tobacco Day

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 heart disease, stroke, 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 health problems.

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 you to quit and continue to stay 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 as well.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products are 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 to plan ahead and have strategies for avoiding or coping in situations that tempt you to smoke. For example when driving in the car or in social situations where others may be drinking alcohol, or smoking, as these may lead to cigarette cravings. If you smoke when you are stressed, try using relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing. 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.

Every year, May 31 is World No Tobacco Day. It highlights the health and additional risks associated with using tobacco, as well as advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. The theme each year varies. Recent themes have included 'Tobacco – a threat to development' and 'Tobacco and heart disease'. These campaigns demonstrate the impact that tobacco has on public health and that it poses to the sustainable development of all countries, including the health and economic wellbeing of their citizens. World No Tobacco Day aims to highlight the link between tobacco and heart and other cardiovascular diseases (CVD), including stroke, which combined are the world's leading causes of death. (www.who.int/tobacco)

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 providing 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/selfcare, then click 'Find a *Self Care pharmacy* near you'.

Your Self Care Pharmacy: