5 steps to quit smoking or using tobacco

According to the CDC, tobacco use is the largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the U.S. and about half of all Americans who smoke will die because of the habit. However, regardless of how long someone has used tobacco or how many times they have tried quitting in the past, it's possible for anyone to stop by making behavior changes.

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Quitting challenges

Cigarettes are highly addictive because of the nicotine they contain. There's a misconception that other forms of tobacco are safer because they don't contain nicotine, but in fact, all forms of tobacco, including dip, cigars, cigarettes, pipe tobacco and loose tobacco, have dangerous carcinogens.

For those who are addicted, smoking quickly becomes part of daily life. By following these five steps, anyone can commit to quitting, improving their health and lowering their risk of smoking and tobacco-related diseases and illnesses.

Step 1: Make a plan

- Set a quit date and give yourself some time to prepare.
- Create a list of the reasons you want to quit. Keep this list handy for when you need reminders.
- Create a list of positive things you can do to distract yourself when you have the urge to smoke or chew.
- Set small milestones and reward yourself when you reach them.

Step 2: Commit to changing your behavior

- Stay away from places or people that make you want to smoke or chew.
- Don't keep tobacco near you.
- Practice other healthy habits like exercising, drinking water and eating nutritious foods.
- To combat cravings, practice meditation or deep breathing.

Step 3: Talk to your doctor

- Tell your primary care provider that you'd like to quit smoking. Your provider may have resources and recommendations for you.
- Ask your provider if prescription or over-the-counter medication could help. Counseling may also be an option.
- Discuss with your provider if or when you should be screened for lung cancer.

Step 4: Get support

- Tell your friends and family about your plan to quit so they can encourage you and hold you accountable.
- Connect with your state quit line at (800) QUIT-NOW.
- Ask your local clinics and hospitals about support groups or workshops.
- Use your insurance benefits. Find out more below.

Step 5: Don't give up!

- If you experience a setback, remind yourself of the reasons you want to quit and get back on track.
- If you've tried to quit in the past without success, use a new approach.
- Try different techniques, avoid triggers and find ways to overcome your cravings.
- Celebrate your progress along the way.

Support for your quitting journey

Get started by having your out-of-pocket quitting costs covered and receive support on your tobacco-free journey. Sanford Health Plan members are eligible for tobacco cessation medications, counseling and coaching at a $0 copay, including:

- Prescription and over-the-counter cessation medications for 180 days
- Up to eight nicotine clinical counseling sessions
- Wellness coaching or consultation to explore the best strategies for you

To learn more, contact the Sanford Health Plan team at (800) 752-5863.

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