

Booklet 4

Staying quit



Aboriginal Respect Symbol. Designed by
Marcus Lee Design for Cancer Council NSW.



Cancer Council
Tackling Tobacco

Congratulations on quitting smoking!

Use this booklet to help you stay quit for good.

Now that you have quit smoking, you will be feeling healthier, and you will be breathing more easily. After a while, you may also start to notice that you have more money to spend on other things.

Benefits of quitting

The best thing people that smoke can do for their health is quit. No matter your age or the length of time you've been smoking, quitting will always improve your health.

There are many benefits of quitting smoking, and some start within a few hours. If you feel tempted to have a cigarette, or even 'just a puff', read the table on the next page to help you remember the great benefits for your health if you stay quit.

By quitting smoking you will reduce your chance of having:

- 16 different cancers
- heart disease and hardening of the arteries
- a stroke
- emphysema and other lung diseases.

Mental health

Quitting smoking means:

- feeling less stressed
- reducing your chances of suffering from anxiety or depression in the long term
- if you are taking any medications for mental health you may have the dosage adjusted, reducing side effects from these medications too.

Appearance, vision and ageing

By staying quit, you are less likely to:

- have brittle bones (that break easily)
- get wrinkles and look older faster
- have yellow teeth and bad breath.

Sexuality and pregnancy

By quitting, you will reduce your chances of:

- impotence
- infertility
- having premature (underdeveloped) and unhealthy babies, or miscarriage.

Children's health

If you have children or little ones around you, your quitting can lower their risk of:

- sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- ear infections
- allergies
- asthma
- bronchitis and other lung problems.

What are the other benefits of quitting?

Although reducing your risk of death and illness is very important, this isn't the only benefit of quitting smoking.

- Quitting smoking will improve your sleep quality including deeper, more restful states of sleep and less sleep disruptions.
- Quitting smoking may improve your physical fitness, endurance and reduce your risk of injury.
- You have a renewed sense of self control and don't have to worry about going to smoke-free areas (e.g. to the movies, out to a restaurant).
- You will be able to save money by not having to buy tobacco, lighters, matches, etc.
- Your fitness will improve and exercising will be easier.
- Your senses of taste and smell will improve.
- You will have more energy to do things.
- You'll have a great feeling of achievement. Many people who quit smoking remember the exact day they quit because it is a source of great pride.
- Because you have quit smoking, others around you will benefit from less exposure to second-hand smoke.
- You will be setting a great example for children and young people.

Time since quitting	Beneficial health changes that take place
Within 20 minutes	Your heart rate drops and your body begins a series of changes that continue for years.
4 hours	The nicotine level in your blood is halved.
12 hours	The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal and the oxygen level increases.
1–2 days	Nicotine by-products are removed from your blood.
2–3 days	Taste buds revive, and your ability to taste and smell improves.
2–12 weeks	Your heart attack risk begins to drop. Circulation improves. Exercise is easier and lung function improves.
Within 3 months	Coughing, sinus congestion and shortness of breath decrease.
1 Year	Your added risk of heart disease is reduced to half that of a smoker.
5 years	Your risk of cancer of the mouth and throat is halved and your risk of stroke is dramatically reduced.
10 years	Your risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker, and your risk of other cancers decreases.
15 years	Your risks of heart disease and death fall to about the same as those of someone who has never smoked.



Slipping up

A lot of people try quitting several times before they finally quit for good. If you slip up, don't feel you are weak; just learn from the experience and go back to your quit plan.

You need to know your 'triggers' and plan to avoid them for the first couple of weeks after quitting. Try to avoid going to places where you know people will be smoking.

If you are worried that you might start smoking again, speak to a nurse or doctor, support worker, or someone else you trust. You can also call the **Quitline** on **13 7848 (13 QUIT)** for advice and support.



Feeling down

People who quit smoking may experience a range of withdrawal symptoms, such as anger, sadness, restlessness, dizziness, headaches and difficulty sleeping. Some people have just a few of these symptoms, while others may have more difficulty. They are a normal part of quitting smoking.

The good news is that they will pass in time – a few days or weeks. Try to think of them as recovery symptoms – a sign that your body is getting better. Remember to take one day at a time, and to reward yourself.

For people with lived experience of mental illness, withdrawal symptoms can sometimes be confused with symptoms of mental illness. Be sure to speak to your doctor if you have any concerns.



Social pressure

If your friends or family are making quitting harder for you, let them know how you feel and ask them not to offer you cigarettes. In the early days of quitting, try to spend time with non-smoking friends and family. It can also help to practise saying, "No thanks, I don't smoke", or, "I don't need cigarettes".

This can help to build your confidence, and to be ready if someone offers you a cigarette.



NRT and quit smoking medications

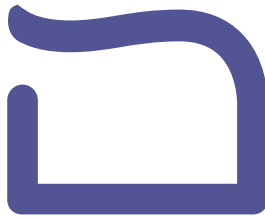
If you are using nicotine patches, gum, or other products to help you quit, check with your health worker, doctor or pharmacist to make sure they are working properly and that you are getting the right dose. You can also ring the **Quitline** on **13 7848 (13 QUIT)** or advice about this.



Putting on weight

Sometimes when people quit smoking, they gain a little weight. The benefits of quitting smoking outweigh the potential health risk from weight gain.

You can keep your weight at a healthy level by getting plenty of exercise and eating a healthy diet with plenty of fruit and vegetables.

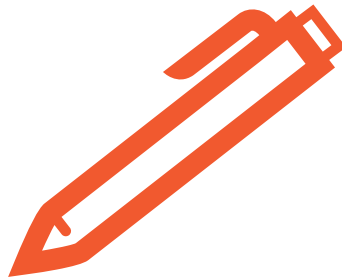


Your **smoke-free** checklist

I no longer smoke.

The hardest part of quitting is over.

- I will find new ways to deal with stress.
- I will stay away from places that make me want to smoke.
- I will remind myself of my reasons for quitting whenever I feel angry or stressed.
- I will talk to a health worker if I am worried about putting on weight.
- I will speak to my doctor if I have any concerns about my mental health.
- I will reward myself for staying quit for good!



For more information, see your health worker, nurse, doctor or support worker about quitting. Quitline can help you by providing free information and support.

You can call them on **13 7848 (13 QUIT)** for the cost of a local call with higher costs from mobile phones.

Congratulations on quitting smoking

- You are now benefiting from the immediate and long-term effects of quitting smoking.
- A lot of people try quitting several times before they finally quit for good.
- Slip-ups are part of the quitting journey, just learn from it and go back to your quit plan.
- Practise saying, “No thanks, I don’t smoke”, or, “I don’t need cigarettes”, to help build your confidence in case you are offered a cigarette.

Acknowledgements

Cancer Council NSW would like to thank staff from NSW Health for their assistance in producing this booklet.

**We’re here for all Australians affected by cancer.
Call 13 11 20 for information and support.**

