

Be Smoke Free: Smoking and Stroke Risk

FACT: Smoking puts you at risk for having a stroke.

Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death and a leading cause of adult disability in the United States. When you stop smoking, you greatly reduce your chances of having a stroke.

Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen in the blood, causing the heart to work harder and allowing blood clots to form more easily. Smoking also increases the amount of build-up in the arteries, which may block the flow of blood to the brain, causing a stroke.

Common concerns about quitting

“I’ll gain weight if I quit smoking.”

Weight gain varies from person to person. The average person gains less than 10 pounds. Exercise and a low-fat diet can help. Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals and pasta. Low-sugar candy may also help. Try to get enough sleep. Ask your doctor how to quit smoking while maintaining your weight.

“What do I do when I get the urge to smoke?”



When possible, stay away from places where others might be smoking. Ask others not to smoke around you. When you do feel the urge to smoke, distract yourself and stay busy. If you can make it three minutes, the urge probably will go away. You can also ask your doctor about prescription medications or nicotine replacement therapy, including over-the-counter patches and gum.

“Smoking relaxes me. I get too nervous and anxious if I don’t smoke.”

First, try to take it easy. It is best to warn those around you that you have quit smoking. Try going for a walk if you get tense. Exercise can help you relax.

“I blew it. What do I do now?”

Smoking cigarettes again does not mean that you have failed. You have already had some success. You got through a number of minutes, days or months without smoking. Don't let relapses serve as excuses to start smoking again. You are an ex-smoker and can continue to be one.

"I've tried to quit smoking before. What makes this time different?"

You can choose to be a non-smoker and be successful. It is important enough to your health to make another attempt. Set a goal for yourself. Think about why you smoke and different ways to handle those reasons without smoking. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for information about local support groups. There are over 46.5 million ex-smokers in the United States. You can be one of them.

Tips to quit smoking:

- Set a Quit Date. Mark your calendars at home and at work.
- Tell your family, friends and co-workers that you are going to quit. Ask for their support.
- Ask your doctor about nicotine replacement therapy or medication that can help control your urges to smoke.

- Throw away all of your cigarettes, ashtrays, lighters and matches before your Quite Date.
- Reward yourself for doing well. Buy something nice for yourself with the money you have saved on cigarettes.

Additional Resources:

American Cancer Society
(800) 227-2345
www.cancer.org

American Lung Association
(800) LUNG USA (586-4872)
www.lungusa.org

National Cancer Institute
(800) 4-CANCER (422-6237)
www.cancer.gov

For more information about ways to reduce your risk of stroke, visit National Stroke Association.
www.stroke.org

Note: This fact sheet is compiled from general, publicly available information and should not be considered recommended treatment for any particular individual. You should consult your provider about any personal medical concerns.

All publications are reviewed by National Stroke Association's Publications Committee.
© 2016 National Stroke Association 03/16