



American Society of Clinical Oncology

Making a world of difference in cancer care

Stopping Tobacco Use After a Cancer Diagnosis

Resources and Guidance for Patients and Families



Doctor-Approved Patient Information from ASCO®

ASCO patient education programs are supported by:



ABOUT ASCO

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) is the world's leading professional organization representing oncology physicians of all oncology subspecialties who care for people with cancer. ASCO's more than 30,000 members from the United States and abroad set the standard for patient care worldwide and lead the fight for more effective cancer treatments, increased funding for clinical and translational research, and, ultimately, cures for the many different types of cancer that strike an estimated 12 million people worldwide each year.



ABOUT CANCER.NET

The best cancer care starts with the best cancer information. Well-informed patients are their own best advocates and invaluable partners for physicians. Cancer.Net (www.cancer.net) brings the expertise and resources of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the voice of the world's cancer physicians, to people living with cancer and to those who care for and about them. All the information and content on Cancer.Net was developed and approved by the cancer doctors who are members of ASCO, making Cancer.Net an up-to-date and trusted resource for cancer information on the Internet. Cancer.Net is supported by the Conquer Cancer Foundation, which provides funding for breakthrough cancer research, professional education, and patient and family support.

Stopping Tobacco Use After a Cancer Diagnosis

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The ideas and opinions expressed in the *Stopping Tobacco Use After a Cancer Diagnosis* booklet do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). The information in this guide is not intended as medical or legal advice, or as a substitute for consultation with a physician or other licensed health care provider. Patients with health care questions should call or see their physician or other health care provider promptly and should not disregard professional medical advice, or delay seeking it, because of information encountered in this booklet. The mention of any product, service, or treatment in this guide should not be construed as an ASCO endorsement. ASCO is not responsible for any injury or damage to persons or property arising out of or related to any use of ASCO's patient education materials, or to any errors or omissions.

Introduction

If you have been diagnosed with cancer and continue to smoke or use other tobacco products, you may believe it is too late to quit or there is no benefit to quitting. Some people feel deep down they don't deserve extra help or care because smoking might have caused their cancer.

However, it is never too late to stop using tobacco.

Whether you are a long-term cancer survivor or a newly diagnosed patient, quitting smoking and other tobacco products is always beneficial. In addition to cigarette smoking, other forms of tobacco use include cigar and pipe smoking; smokeless tobacco, such as chewing tobacco and snuff; and so-called alternative tobacco products, including waterpipes (hookahs) and electronic cigarettes. None of these is safe to use; learn more at www.cancer.net/othertobaccoproducts.

In many ways, there are advantages to quitting after a diagnosis of cancer:

- You will have the support and encouragement of your health care team.
- You will feel like you are doing something positive for yourself and your life.
- You will be able to focus all your energy on getting well.

Most smokers and tobacco users want to quit. Although it can be difficult, many people are successful, and a variety of treatment options and resources exist to help you reach your goal. It is always possible to quit, and the entire health care team may be involved in helping you, such as the doctors, nurses, social workers, physician assistants, or other health care professionals. Use this booklet to learn more about the benefits of stopping tobacco use after a cancer diagnosis and to find a list of programs and other resources that can help you reach this goal.

Benefits of Quitting

There are many physical and psychological benefits to stopping tobacco use after a cancer diagnosis, including:

- Longer survival
- A better chance of successful treatment
- Fewer and less serious side effects from all types of cancer treatment, including surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy
- Faster recovery from treatment
- Decreased risk of secondary cancers
- Lower risk of infection
- Easier breathing
- More energy
- Better quality of life



On the other hand, continuing to use tobacco has the following risks:

- Shorter survival
- Less of a chance of successful, effective treatment
- More complications from surgery, such as side effects involving the heart and lungs, and a slower recovery
- More treatment-related side effects from chemotherapy, such as infection, fatigue, heart and lung problems, and weight loss
- Additional side effects from radiation therapy, including dry mouth, mouth sores, loss of taste, and problems with your bones and soft tissues
- Increased chance of recurrence (when the cancer comes back after treatment)
- Increased risk of other serious illnesses, such as heart and lung diseases or a second cancer

Talking With Your Doctor About Your Tobacco Use

Many people with cancer hesitate to tell a doctor or other member of the health care team about their smoking or chewing habit. They worry the doctor may judge them or that they may receive less support for their cancer. Other people think quitting after a diagnosis of cancer is pointless because they already have cancer and believe using tobacco can help relieve the stress of a cancer diagnosis. However, none of these ideas is true. In fact, there are significant health benefits linked to stopping tobacco use even after a cancer diagnosis, and your health care team is committed to helping people who want to reach this goal.

It is important to talk with your doctor or other health care professional about your behaviors. People who use tobacco products on a daily basis are addicted to nicotine. No matter what your level of tobacco use, this addiction will make it harder to stop, even if you are motivated to quit. Understanding your level of nicotine dependence will help your doctor determine the appropriate treatment to help you quit and maintain a long-term, nicotine-free lifestyle.

Let your doctor know the following facts about your tobacco use:

- Whether you've smoked at least 100 cigarettes in your lifetime
- Whether you currently smoke cigarettes
- Whether you smoke within the first 30 minutes after waking up
- How many years and how many cigarettes per day you've smoked regularly
- The age you began smoking
- How long it's been since you've last smoked regularly (if you've stopped smoking)
- How many times you have tried to quit smoking and how long you were successful with each attempt
- What methods you have used or are now using to try to quit smoking
- Whether people in your household smoke
- Whether smoking is allowed in your workplace
- Whether you use or have used forms of tobacco other than cigarettes and how often you have used them
- Whether your tobacco usage has changed after being diagnosed with cancer

Myths about quitting smoking

Myth: Smoking is entirely a personal choice.

Fact: Tobacco contains the addictive chemical nicotine, and many people who start smoking quickly become dependent on nicotine.

Myth: There is no point in quitting smoking now that I have cancer.

Fact: It is never too late to quit smoking. People who quit smoking after a cancer diagnosis live longer, have a better chance of successful treatment, experience fewer side effects from treatment, recover faster, and have a better quality of life.

Myth: Quitting smoking is too stressful for patients undergoing cancer treatment.

Fact: Although nicotine dependence is hard to break because the withdrawal process can be uncomfortable, the benefits of quitting smoking outweigh the discomforts.

Myth: Smokers can quit by themselves; a doctor's advice isn't needed.

Fact: Doctors and other members of the health care team provide support, information, and any necessary drug therapies to help people quit.

Myth: Most smoking cessation treatments have a low success rate.

Fact: There are several medications that can help you cope with nicotine withdrawal and increase your chances of successfully overcoming your nicotine addiction. Ask your doctor and other members of your health care team for help.

How to Quit Smoking and Using Tobacco

A variety of treatments and resources are available for people who want to stop using tobacco, including medications and counseling. Your chances of successfully quitting are greater if you use a comprehensive plan that includes steps such as setting a quit date, developing strategies to deal with triggers (situations that cause you to want to use tobacco), and building a network of support. Talk with your doctor about which approach may work best for you.



Medications

Using medication can at least double your chances of quitting smoking. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved three types of medications to treat nicotine dependence:

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT).

NRT is the most widely used medication. It has mild side effects and is available over the counter and by prescription in various forms (gum, a lozenge, a patch that you place on the skin, an inhaler, and a nasal spray). NRT reduces the

symptoms of nicotine withdrawal and cravings. Your doctor will help find the best dose for you based on your current smoking habits.

Bupropion (Wellbutrin, Zyban). This antidepressant medication may be used to reduce withdrawal symptoms, even if you are not depressed. Common side effects include dry mouth and insomnia (difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep).

Varenicline (Chantix). This medication reduces withdrawal symptoms and keeps you from enjoying nicotine if you start smoking again. Common side effects include nausea, vivid dreams, constipation, and drowsiness.

Counseling

In addition to medication, counseling increases your chances of successfully stopping tobacco use. Consider talking with your doctor about getting a referral to meet with a professionally trained smoking cessation counselor or mental health therapist, especially if several of your attempts to quit have been unsuccessful or if you are experiencing the following:

- Severe feelings of anxiety or depression
- Not enough support from family and friends in your effort to quit
- A dependence on alcohol or other substances

Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurers have different regulations as to what types of tobacco cessation programs they cover and how much payment they require from participants. Talk with a nurse, social worker, or other member of your health care team to learn what may be covered through your insurance policy or to learn about your options if you do not have health insurance.

Questions to ask your doctor

Your doctor is your partner in your effort to quit. Ask for help understanding the consequences of tobacco use, ways to stop using tobacco, and local resources available to help you reach your goal.

Consider asking your doctor the following questions:

- How is smoking or using tobacco hurting my health?
- What are the health benefits of quitting tobacco?
- How will smoking or other tobacco use affect how well the cancer treatment works? Will I experience more or different side effects from treatment if I continue to use tobacco?
- What medications are available to help me stop?
- What behavioral changes do I need to make to stop using tobacco?
- How can I avoid or reduce the triggers that make me want to smoke and use tobacco?
- How can you and your team help me manage the stress of quitting along with the stress of a cancer diagnosis?
- What smoking/tobacco cessation resources are available in my community?
- If I am worried about the costs of programs to help me quit using tobacco, who can help me with these concerns?
- How can my family and friends help me?
- How often should you and I discuss my progress?

Use this space to begin working on a plan to quit with a health care team member. This plan is not a complete list, just some suggestions to help you get started. For additional resources, see the list on the next page.

My plan to stop tobacco use

- Talk with my doctor, nurse, or other health care professional about stopping tobacco

- Set a quit date: _____

- Call a quitline and/or enroll in an online program for stopping tobacco use

- Ask about medications that can help me stop using tobacco

- Ask for help identifying and removing triggers that make me want to use tobacco

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

Resources to Help You Quit

The following organizations provide telephone and web-based counseling to help you quit smoking and using tobacco products. Most of these are free, but some programs charge a fee. Because programs and services continually change, this list may not be inclusive. Visit ASCO's patient education website, Cancer.Net (www.cancer.net), to get additional information and support options.

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

www.ahrq.gov/consumer/tobacco/helpsmokers.htm

American Cancer Society: Quit for Life

- www.quitnow.net
- 866-QUIT-4-LIFE
(866-784-8454) *24 hours a day, seven days a week (except Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the Fourth of July)*

American Legacy Foundation: Become an EX

www.becomeanex.org

American Lung Association

- **Lung HelpLine:**
www.lung.org/about-us/lung-helpline.html
- **Freedom From Smoking Online**
(this is an online program for quitting smoking):
www.ffsonline.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- **Five Keys for Quitting:**
www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/how_to_quit/you_can_quit/five_keys/
- **Quit Smoking:** www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/index.htm

National Cancer Institute (NCI): Smokefree

- www.smokefree.gov
- **Smokefree Women:**
women.smokefree.gov
- **Smokefree Teen:**
teen.smokefree.gov
- **LiveHelp** (*live online assistance*):
livehelp.cancer.gov/app/chat/chat_launch
8 AM to 11 PM ET, Monday through Friday (English only)
- **Local and state quitline:**
800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669)
- **NCI's telephone quitline:**
877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848);
TTY 800-332-8615
8 AM to 8 PM ET, Monday through Friday (English and Spanish)

Nicotine Anonymous

www.nicotine-anonymous.org

QuitNet, Inc.

www.quitnet.com

**U.S. Department of
Defense: Quit Tobacco—
Make Everyone Proud**

*(for active service members and
veterans)*

- www.ucanquit2.org
- **24-hr helpline for TRICARE
beneficiaries**
 - North Region: 866-459-8766
 - South Region: 877-414-9949
 - West Region: 866-244-6870
 - Veterans enrolled in the VA
system: 877-222-8387

**U.S. Food and Drug
Administration: Guide to
Smoking Cessation Products**

[www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/
ConsumerUpdates/ucm198176.htm](http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm198176.htm)

**Mobile apps for quitting
smoking**

These apps are available to
download through Apple's
iTunes store:

- LIVESTRONG.com: MyQuit Coach
- My QuitLine
- Smokefree QuitGuide



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www.asco.org | www.cancer.net

For more information about ASCO's patient information resources,
call toll-free 888-651-3038 or e-mail contactus@cancer.net.

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