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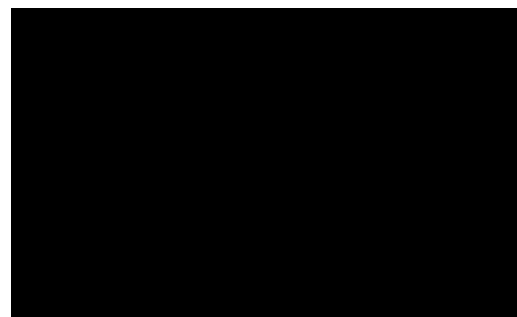
Quitting Smoking for Older Adults

Quitting When You're Older

If you're older, you may wonder if it's too late to quit smoking. Or you may ask yourself if it's even possible to quit at your age, especially if you've tried more than once and haven't been successful. Although it can be challenging to quit when you're older, there are proven ways to do it. You CAN be successful.

Many Older Smokers Want To Quit

Most older adults who smoke know that it's not good for them. For years, they have heard that smoking can cause many serious health problems, including cancer. They know that quitting would lead to many improvements in their life. If they quit, they know they could likely have more money, less coughing, better smelling breath, fewer wrinkles, and more energy. They would also reduce their risk of heart attack, stroke, bronchitis, and cataracts, among other diseases.



It's Never Too Late

If you are like most smokers 50 and older, you probably have tried to quit before. You might think that you will quit someday, or maybe you think that it is too late for you to quit. But it's never too late to quit. Quitting has benefits at all ages.

If you have health problems, then many of your symptoms, your quality of life, and your future health will start improving almost immediately if you quit now. For example,

- 20 minutes after quitting, your heart rate drops to more normal levels.
- 12 hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide level in your blood returns to normal.
- 2 weeks to 3 months after quitting, your heart attack risk begins to drop and your lung function begins to improve.

If you've been diagnosed with a significant health problem, quitting smoking makes it more likely the treatment will be successful and that you'll have fewer side effects.

Learn more about the health benefits of quitting from ["Within 20 Minutes of Quitting"](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Alcohol Use And Older Adults

COPD

Lung Cancer

[The information in this topic was provided by the National Cancer Institute](#)

Topic Last Reviewed: June 2014

Challenges for Older Adults

There are a few reasons why it can be difficult for an older person to quit. You may have tried to quit more than once before, but were not successful. If you weren't able to quit before, you already know how hard it can be. You may feel too discouraged to try again.

Also, for someone who has been smoking a long time, smoking has become so much a part of everyday life that it is hard to let it go. It may feel like you're saying goodbye to a friend.

Another reason is that nicotine, the main drug in cigarettes, is very addictive, and this makes it very hard for a smoker to quit. One of the biggest challenges that most smokers face for the first couple of weeks after they quit smoking is getting through the withdrawal symptoms.

Reasons Older Smokers Have Quit

Many former smokers who are 50 and older say that their main reason for quitting was for their health or due to their doctor's advice. Another common reason smokers quit is to be in control of their lives and to be free from cigarettes. A lot of former smokers also said that pleasing or helping a loved one was a big part of their decision to quit. These all are good reasons. The most important reasons for quitting are the ones you decide on for yourself.

Life Experience May Help

Older adults have strengths that can help them quit. Over their lifetimes, they have had lots of experience accomplishing difficult tasks. At this point in their lives, they are likely to be better prepared to take on the challenge of quitting smoking than when they were younger. They know quitting is tough, and they know it won't be easy, so once they decide to try again, they may be more willing to work at it to make sure they succeed.

You Can Be Successful

There are challenges in trying to quit smoking no matter what your age, but people quit smoking every day, and many of those who quit are 50+.

The tips and strategies in this health topic are designed to help older adults who have tried to quit in the past as well as those who are trying for the first time. Use them. They can help you quit for good.

You can also check out [Clear Horizons: A Quit-Smoking Guide for People 50 and Older](#), developed by the National Cancer Institute. This is a hard-copy smoking cessation guide with similar information that is available for PDF viewing, download, and printing.



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