

TIPS FOR TALKING TO A DOCTOR TO HELP QUIT OR REDUCE SMOKING

It may be hard to watch the person you care for start or continue to smoke when you know it is damaging their health. Or you may also smoke cigarettes and want to quit to improve your health and not expose others to passive smoking.

There are many ways to stop smoking and lots of resources to support you or the person you care for along the way.

The key point is to speak to the doctor to get help for yourself or the person that you care for to quit – you deserve to be supported.



Doctors, practice nurses and pharmacists are familiar with the challenges of quitting and can support smoking cessation, but many people find it difficult to talk with a doctor. To get the most out of your conversation with the health professional, speak up when you don't understand something or think it's 'not quite right' for you or the person you care for.

Remember that smokers need to decide to quit because they realise it will benefit them, not because someone else wants them to. The following are some questions you may like to discuss with the person you care for before visiting a doctor, and then ask the doctor to give you more information on the things that are of most concern to both of you.

It is important that health professionals include carers in discussions about smoking cessation because the nicotine withdraw symptoms and cravings will need to be managed, there may be nicotine replacement therapy or medicines a carer may need to assist with providing, and sometimes quitting can impact on other medicines or underlying conditions a person has. Make sure you ask for support as a carer through this process – it will help give the person you care for the best chance at quitting.

Questions you may want to ask the doctor

- > What methods are recommended to quit (like cutting down or 'cold turkey')?
- > What about nicotine vaping products like e-cigarettes?

There are lots of options to help a person quit smoking. Which ones is best may depend on a number of factors. E-cigarettes and other nicotine vaping products are not first-line treatments for smoking cessation.

- > What are the possible nicotine withdrawal symptoms? How can these be managed?
- > How can cravings be managed?

If a person has been smoking for a long time, their body is used to regular doses of nicotine and when they quit smoking they will may withdrawal symptoms. These can last for a few days to a few weeks and are different for everyone, and may include feeling tense and irritable, appetite changes, and trouble sleeping.

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There are also other factsheets that may be useful to you as a carer:

- > Myths about electronic cigarettes and nicotine vaping products
- > Nicotine Replacement Therapy or Nicotine Vaping Products?
- > How can I access nicotine vaping products for myself or the person I care for?
- > Tips for talking to the person you care for about smoking, vaping and quitting
- > Nicotine Vaping and Young People

➤ What nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is recommended?

NRT aims to reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms that occur when you stop smoking. Available from pharmacies and some supermarkets without a prescription, it comes in different forms such as patches, gum, oral sprays, inhalers and lozenges. Combining 2 forms of NRT has been shown to work better than using just 1 method.

➤ What medications are available to help stop smoking?

There are prescription medicines available they work by blocking nicotine receptors in the brain so smoking is less enjoyable. These can reduce withdrawal symptoms but they are not suitable for everybody.

➤ Will any usual medicines need adjusting while/when trying to quit smoking?

The chemicals in tobacco smoke can affect how some medicines work while a person smokes nicotine, and also if they stop smoking.¹ This means that some medicine dosages may need to be changed when a person stops smoking.

➤ What if this quit attempt is not successful (relapse)?

➤ What other support is available (like support groups) for the person I care for or me to help with quitting?

Stopping smoking is different for everyone. Some people find it easy to quit, others don't. Most people who have quit smoking for good have made several serious attempts.

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➤ What are the costs involved in what has been discussed?

It is important to ask this as there may be costs involved in NRT, medications or supports recommended by the doctor for you or the person you care for. If cost is a barrier to quitting, make sure you talk to the doctor about this so all options can be explored.

Quitline: 13 7848 (13 QUIT)

Research shows that calling Quitline increases the chances of stopping smoking successfully. Quitline counsellors help build and sustain motivation to quit and help build a stop smoking plan.

The cost of the call is the same as a local call from a landline, with higher costs for mobiles. Once a person contacts the Quitline, there is an option to request an automatic return call – this means only paying for making the initial contact.

Quitline counsellors can give advice about the different ways to quit and send you a wide range of written resources in multiple languages. They can arrange for an interpreter and all discussions are confidential. Aboriginal Quitline is also available. And you can also:

- » Build a 'quit plan'
- » Sign up for QuitCoach
- » Download the My QuitBuddy app

Quitline is FREE and available in each state and territory. More information is available for [what to expect when you call Quitline](#) or the visit the [Quit website](#).

1 Tobacco in Australia

SOURCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- » [Help to quit](#) (ACT)
- » [Icanquit](#) (NSW)
- » [Quit Victoria](#) (VIC)
- » [Be smoke free](#) (SA)
- » [Quit Tasmania](#) (TAS)
- » [Make smoking history](#) (WA)
- » [Quit HQ](#) (QLD)
- » [NT Quitline](#) (NT)
- » [Aboriginal Quitline](#)

REMEMBER!

Seek support from your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about how to help someone access nicotine vaping products or support with smoking cessation. You can also phone the **Quitline on 13 7848**.

Visit the Carer Gateway website at carergateway.gov.au/help-advice or call them on 1800 422 737 to find local services and support for carers.

All factsheets can be found at carersaustralia.com.au/medicine-safety/smoking-cessation-nicotine-products-and-e-cigarettes

