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## HOW TO QUIT SMOKING TODAY

Why should you quit smoking? Tobacco use is the most common cause of preventable death. But it isn't easy to quit; many people try several times. Every quit-smoking attempt brings you closer to a success. A good place to start is with your healthcare provider and the New York State Quitline. You can receive free nicotine patches or gum by calling the Quitline (866-697-8487) or visiting them online at [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com). UPMC also offers a free smoking cessation program including counseling over text-messaging (English or Spanish) and 12 weeks of nicotine patches, gum and lozenges sent to your door. Interested persons can sign up for the program by calling 585-504-9461 or emailing [quitcenter@upmc.rochester.edu](mailto:quitcenter@upmc.rochester.edu)

But why is it so hard? Just like experiencing grief, there are stages a person goes through when quitting smoking. Understanding the stages will bring you more success.

If you feel you are in denial of needing to quit or not willing to talk about it, this is the Precontemplation Stage. It might not feel helpful at this stage to learn about all of the harms and dangers of smoking. A more effective approach to help someone in the Precontemplation stage would be to lend an ear and slowly talk about concerns they have about smoking.

The next stage is Contemplation. Here you are starting to think about quitting and you are starting to ask some questions. Think about what might be holding you back from quitting cigarettes, or what might be hard about it once you start. Make a list of your top reasons to want to quit, then think of past attempts as successes: when you quit last time what worked well?

It is important to have strong motivations to quit. This next stage involves preparation and planning. In the Preparation stage, you can go over obstacles and triggers beforehand and choose a good strategy to overcome them.

You will then want to talk to your doctor again and get started on a treatment option. There are six FDA-Approved smoking cessation treatments, plus at least two prescription medications you might try. Nicotine gum is great but it is intended for short-term use as you get used to not having cigarettes. Nicotine patches come in three stages, and your provider can help you choose which stage to start at and then wean to lower doses until you are done completely. Nicotine lozenges, a nasal spray, and even a nicotine inhaler that could be prescribed are other options. Your Doctor may talk to you about Chantix (Varenicline) or Wellbutrin (Bupropion); pill options that cause your body to “dislike” smoking.

The next stages involve action and maintenance. You might feel like "I'm not smoking but I'm thinking about it a lot." Support is key and allowing someone to talk about “close calls” and giving feedback is important at this stage. They may also need help altering or refining methods of coping, or may need to learn a new self-image as a non-smoker.

The last stage could be relapse. This can be common. Most people will go through relapse before permanently quitting. Pointing out your past successes can be useful here.

Overall, every try counts and it is possible to successfully quit smoking. Do: ask your healthcare provider about quit options and counseling. Do: call the NYS Quitline or another resource like the URMC program. Don't use other nicotine sources like chewing tobacco or dissolvables. These can be like poison to your body and are not approved for use to quit smoking.

I encourage everyone to make that try to quit using tobacco today. I know you can do it.

Sincerely,

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