



Life Saving Tips About... Smoking and PAD



What is the link between smoking and PAD?

You may know that smoking is a major cause of heart disease, cancer and lung disease. Smoking is also the number one cause of PAD. Studies show that smoking even half a pack of cigarettes per day may increase the risk of having PAD by 30 to 50 percent.

With every puff, smoking harms your blood vessels. It speeds up the buildup of plaque in the artery walls and increases the formation of leg artery blockages. Smoking constricts blood vessels and causes the blood to clot.

As a result, **smoking causes PAD to get worse faster.** It increases the chance of having leg pain (or claudication) even while at rest, losing a foot or a leg due to amputation, or having a heart attack or stroke. As many as one out of two people with PAD who continue to smoke will have a heart attack or stroke or die within 5 years.

What can quitting smoking do for you?

Quitting smoking may be the most important life saving step people with PAD can take. And, it is not too late. Research shows that people with PAD can lower the risk of heart attack, stroke or death when they quit smoking. Plus, you will enjoy these other health rewards:

- Your blood pressure will be lower in just a few days.
- You will reduce your risk of foot ulcers, eye problems, nerve damage and kidney disease (if you have diabetes).
- You will lower your risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, lungs and bladder.
- In one year after quitting, your blood flow and breathing will be improved and your coughing and shortness of breath will be reduced.

- You will protect your children and grandchildren from second-hand smoke.
- Best of all, you will live longer and better.

What can you do to quit smoking for good?

You may be saying: "I have tried to quit smoking and failed every time. There is no way I can quit." You are not alone. Many long-time smokers feel that way. But each year, millions of smokers try quitting and more and more are quitting for good. There are three reasons for their success:

1. We know a lot more about the best methods for quitting smoking.
2. There are medicines that can help you break the habit and deal with cravings.
3. They have made up their mind to quit and to stick with it.



Studies show that when people follow these five steps, they have the best chances of quitting for good.

Step 1 Get ready.

- Set a quit date within the next 30 days.
 - Mark the date on your calendar.
- Before your quit date, get rid of ALL cigarettes and ashtrays in your home, clothes, car and work place.
- Write down your reasons for quitting. Put the list in a place where you will see it every day.
- Think about what worked and what did not work in your past attempts to quit.

Step 2 Get support.

- Tell your family and friends that you are going to quit and want their support. Ask them not to smoke around you or leave cigarettes out.
- Talk to your health care provider about your decision to quit and ask for help and support.
- Get counseling. Studies show that the more counseling people get when quitting smoking — either one-on-one, in a group, or even by telephone — the more likely they are to quit. Call your local hospital or health department about programs in your area.

Step 3 Learn new skills and behaviors

- During the first few weeks after you have quit, change your routine. Take a different route to work. Drink tea instead of coffee. Eat your meals in a different seat.
- Distract yourself from the urge to smoke by going for a short walk, cleaning a closet or a drawer, or doing something with your hands like knitting or working on a puzzle.
- To reduce your stress, take a hot bath or shower, make time for a long walk, or read a book.
- Drink a lot of water and other low- or no-calorie fluids.

Step 4 Get medicine to help you quit.

- Learn more about the quit smoking products that can help lessen your urge to smoke and how to use them so they will work for you. Some products contain small amounts of nicotine. They include nicotine gum, hard candies and nicotine patches that you can buy without a prescription. There is also a nicotine inhaler and a nasal spray that you can buy with a prescription. Bupropion SR is a prescription medicine that contains no nicotine but reduces cravings for cigarettes. While all of these products can help people quit smoking, they are not safe for everyone.
- Talk with your health care provider about whether you should try any of them to help you quit smoking.



Step 5 Be prepared for tough situations or times you may slip.

- Avoid drinking beer, wine or other alcoholic drinks. Switch to soda or ice water with lemon or lime.
- Stay away from places where people are smoking so you will not be tempted.
- Don't worry if you are gaining a few extra pounds after you quit smoking. Eat a healthy diet and stay as active as you can. Focus on your goal of quitting smoking.
- Deal with a bad mood or feeling depressed by doing something good for yourself. Call a friend to go to lunch or a movie. Buy something you want with the money you have been saving by not smoking. Take a walk or a nice hot bath.
- Many people who try to quit smoking slip up or relapse during the first 3 months after quitting. Don't give up or beat yourself if you start smoking again. Go back to Step 1 and get ready to quit again. Quitting smoking is hard but you can do it!

My Life Saving Quit Smoking Action Plan

Now that you are ready to quit, get started by writing your action plan.

Write down your quit smoking date.

Write down three reasons why you want to quit smoking for good.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write down the three hardest times or cravings you will face and what you will do to avoid smoking.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write down the names and phone numbers of three people who can help you quit smoking for good.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Write down how you will reward yourself for quitting smoking.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Where can you find out more about quitting smoking?

You may want to contact these groups for more information and where you can get support for quitting smoking.

American Heart Association
(800) AHA-USA1 (800-242-8721)

American Lung Association
(212) 315-8700
800-LUNG-USA (800- 586-4872)

American Cancer Society
800-282-4914

National Cancer Institute
(800) 4-CANCER (800-422-6237)

This educational resource was created by the Vascular Disease Foundation (VDF). VDF ceased operations in January 2014. In October 2014, Vascular Cures acquired most of VDF's digital assets and educational resources. VDF was founded in 1998 with the mission to provide public education and improving awareness about vascular diseases. Vascular Cures is now the only organization in the country dedicated exclusively to finding cures for vascular disease and to providing resources, information and education to patients with vascular diseases outside the heart. Please help Vascular Cures continue to make this critical educational information available. Your contribution will make saving lives a greater reality. Make a donation today at: www.vascularcures.org.

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