

Stop-smoking tips from the American Lung Association

Now is the ideal time to throw out your cigarettes: not only is the new year just around the corner, but also Chicago will go smoke-free on Jan. 16.

If quitting smoking is at the top of your New Year's resolution list, the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago offers these 10 tips to help you conquer the habit:

- Write down a list of reasons why you want to quit. Carry it with you and remind yourself of the reasons when you have the urge to smoke. Smokers who are motivated become quitters.
- Set a date. Stopping smoking is probably the most important health decision you'll make in your life, so don't quit on a whim. Take time to plan your strategy.
- Remove all evidence of smoking from your life. Clean your car interior, launder your clothes, put away your ashtrays and get rid of all your cigarettes. Holding on to cigarettes or lighters "just in case" undermines your self-confidence.
- Change your typical daily routine in as many ways as possible. When you eat breakfast, don't sit in the same place at the kitchen table. Rearrange your furniture. Take a new route to work. Drink tea instead of coffee. Have lunch in the conference room rather than at your desk.
- Reward yourself for not smoking. Set goals, both short term and long term. Have a specific reward (not something you were going to do anyway!) for each milestone you reach. Research shows that filling out contracts and rewarding yourself are popular activities among successful quitters.
- Cut down on alcohol and caffeinated beverages. Drink a lot of water. Carry a water bottle with you everywhere you go.
- Plan ahead for temptation. Eat frequent small meals to stabilize your blood sugar levels. Keep healthy substitutes handy to keep your hands and mouth busy, like carrots, raisins, gum, hard candy and lollipops. You can also keep your hands busy by carrying a stress ball or a doodle pad or a pack of cards. Plan nonsmoking tactics before you go to events where other people might be smoking.
- Do something physical (take a walk, do some push-ups, just DO SOMETHING) especially when you are angry, stressed or bored.
- Be proactive about spending more time with nonsmokers and/or ex-smokers.
- If you slip and smoke, don't be discouraged. Many former smokers tried to stop several times before they finally succeeded. Just like anything new, we have to practice not smoking to get it right. If a slip happens, stop right there. Examine what went wrong. Learn from what happened. And quit again.

For more information, call on smoking cessation programs offered by the American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago at (312) 243-2000.

- Source: American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago

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