Quitting is a good idea

Smoking cigarettes can lead to many health problems and early death. Smoking causes heart disease, cancers, stroke and respiratory illness, reduces fitness and can aggravate asthma and allergies.

Besides your health, there are plenty of other reasons to stop smoking ...

- A pack a day smoker can save around $3,000 after one year of quitting. Other reasons for you might be ...
  - Concern for the health of your children/others close to you
  - Trying to have a baby or you or your partner are pregnant
  - Other reasons you have:

Now is a good time to quit

Quitting at any age brings major and immediate benefits to your health. Your body begins cleaning itself within hours of your last cigarette and you will soon look better and have more energy, because your blood oxygen levels are higher.

A year after quitting, your risk of dying from heart disease has halved. In 10 years, your risk of lung cancer is more than halved and continues to decline over time.

It’s important that you want to quit ... and feel confident you can succeed.

The following tips may help:

- As soon as you quit, call yourself a non-smoker.
- Get rid of your ashtrays, lighters and anything else that reminds you of smoking.
- Think about when and why you have smoked, and plan ahead for difficult situations.
Beating cravings

When you stop smoking, your body’s cravings for nicotine will be strongest the first two days after quitting, then decrease over the next two weeks. If you get through the first two weeks you have a good chance of quitting for good.

Medications to help control cravings are:

- **Nicotine replacement therapies** (gum, patches or inhaler). These can be bought from a chemist, who can explain how to use them.
- **Bupropion** is a non-nicotine medication (tablet) that needs to be prescribed by your doctor.

Even the worst cravings will last only a few minutes – if you can resist them for this period, they will pass.

Other symptoms of withdrawal

Most smokers will suffer from some withdrawal symptoms. These can include restlessness, mood changes, trouble concentrating, irritability or anger, anxiety, dizziness or headaches, tingling sensations, muscle aches and sweating, digestive upsets and coughing.

Some of these occur because your body is adapting to the absence of nicotine; some are signs that your body is cleaning itself, eg, coughing helps clear the lungs of tar and mucus.

Things to remember

- Research shows that drinking alcohol within the first two weeks of quitting may reduce your chances of success.
- Try to cut down on coffee & cola for a few weeks after quitting as, without nicotine, your body absorbs twice as much caffeine, which can make you feel anxious.
- Successful quitting usually takes a number of attempts. A slip-up does not mean that you have failed. Don’t be hard on yourself – work out how you will manage that situation differently next time. Practice saying “No thanks, I don’t smoke” and remind yourself of your reasons for quitting.

**Quitline** is a confidential telephone service providing information, support and advice for quitting.

You can call **Quitline 131 848** for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Australia.