

Resources and Support

California Smokers' Helpline

1-800-NO-BUTTS (1-800-662-8887)

www.nobutts.org

Or download the free **No Butts** mobile app

National Quitline

1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)

Nicotine Anonymous

Visit <https://nicotine-anonymous.org>

to find a meeting in your area.

HOW TO REMAIN SMOKE-FREE

A Guide to Avoiding Relapse for the LGBTQ Community

Originally produced by Lyon-Martin Women's Health Services. Revised by the Coalition of Lavender Americans on Smoking and Health and the Tobacco Education Clearinghouse of California with special thanks to Bob Gordon.

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You **Quit Smoking...** Good for you!

Now it is important for you to develop the tools to *remain* smoke-free. The keys are self-awareness and vigilance.

This booklet offers simple tips to help you keep your commitment to your new smoke-free lifestyle. Many of these tips apply to everyone who kicks the habit. In addition, this guide will address what is special about quitting smoking for those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer.

If you have not smoked for at least 72 hours, your body has rid itself of all traces of nicotine, the addictive substance in tobacco. However, smoking is also an emotional and physiological habit. To help you remain smoke-free, all components of the addiction must be addressed.

Stopping smoking is a significant lifestyle change for most people, perhaps the first of many changes contemplated. Replacing an old, unhealthy habit with a new, healthy one does not just happen by chance—it happens by design.

Know Yourself

Self-awareness is at the heart of any plan to remain smoke-free. Ask yourself some questions about your former habit. For example:

- ▼ What role did cigarettes play in your life?
- ▼ What needs were met by the habit and how might you meet those needs as a nonsmoker?
- ▼ Were there particular times when you just *had* to have a cigarette?
- ▼ Were there other times when it was easy not to light up?
- ▼ Did you feel a greater urge to smoke if others were smoking nearby?

The answers to these and other questions will help you map out a successful program to remain smoke-free.

HALT!

Remember the acronym. Do your best not to get too:

Hungry **Angry** **Lonely** **Tired**

These are the most common stressors that weaken your resolve to remain smoke-free. Since we don't live in a perfect world, there is no way you will be able to completely avoid feeling hungry, angry, lonely or tired over the course of time. The trick is to plan ahead and to have an "emergency" plan ready so that you don't get too hungry, angry, lonely or tired.

You know yourself best. Under which circumstances are you most at risk to relapse? Take extra precautions to avoid those circumstances and make a plan in advance in case you find yourself in a vulnerable situation.

Enhance Your Smoke-Free Lifestyle

Make use of the many opportunities that the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community has to offer.

- ▼ support groups for ex-smokers and other issues
- ▼ HIV service organizations in need of volunteers
- ▼ sports organizations
- ▼ political organizations
- ▼ social organizations

By involving yourself in new, exciting arenas, you may find that your resolve to remain smoke-free is strengthened. You may also develop new support systems to help you stay smoke-free.

Be Good to Yourself

No matter what happens, don't be hard on yourself. If you should slip and have a cigarette, remember that stopping smoking is a process and a slip is just a slip. Don't allow it to be an excuse to go back to smoking.

Frequently remind yourself that you are accomplishing an important and difficult goal. As hard as it may be to believe, there are many reports that tobacco is more addictive than heroin. You deserve an enormous pat on the back and who better to give you one, than you yourself?

Get tickets for a concert
Cook a healthy meal
Join a sports team
Take in a movie
Call that flirt
Visit a friend

Reward Yourself

Chances are you smoked for a long time. Smoking was an easy and familiar way in which you rewarded yourself for any number of things. Now, you are making a dramatic lifestyle change. You have decided to give up cigarettes because you know it will benefit you in the long run. But it is critical to find ways to reward yourself in the short term.

Even if you were not undertaking this major effort to improve your life, you deserve to treat yourself well. Make a list of healthy ways in which you can give yourself immediate rewards to encourage the continuation of this process and to counteract any feelings of deprivation you may experience.

Plan Ahead

Plan, as best you can, to avoid situations where others are smoking. It's not always easy, but you'd be surprised how a little planning can help.

- ▼ Let all your friends know that you are a nonsmoker. Encourage your friends to have nonsmoking parties with a designated smoking area outside.
- ▼ Plan to attend smoke-free events.
- ▼ Tell your smoking friends in advance that they can't smoke in your home and car.

What if you used to light up because it felt reassuring to have something in your hands? Holding on to a tactile device can indeed be soothing. Consider carrying a small, squeezable object like a rubber ball or a piece of clay. You'd be surprised how it can help you cope with your anxiety. Be creative.

Remember the 5 D's

Delay

The longer you can put off reaching for that cigarette, the more smoke-free time you will have under your belt, and the easier it will be to continue on the path to improved health. Remember your resolve.

Deep Breathing

Focus on your breathing. Circulate that oxygen and clear the lungs. After a while, the urge for a cigarette will lessen. Deep breathing exercises can help reduce stress.

Drink Plenty of Water

Drink lots of water, preferably sipped through a straw. Drinking water acts as an appetite suppressant.

Do Something

Get active! Be specific and focused. You may decide to choose a familiar activity that you never associated with smoking in the past. Or you may choose a new activity that you did not consider when you were a smoker. The main thing is to occupy yourself comfortably during those moments when you would be most likely to light up out of boredom. Make a list of reasons to remain smoke-free. Add to that list on a regular basis. Don't forget to include the reason, "I don't want to go through this again!"

Dialogue With a Friend Who Quit Smoking

One of the most helpful techniques for remaining smoke-free is to seek out the support of others who have done so, including those who are at the same stage of quitting as you are. Learn from each other, encourage each other and share those moments when you want a cigarette more than anything. This will often help you get through the most trying times. Make a pact with one or more special buddies to be there for each other. Consider joining a support group for ex-smokers.

Nutrition and Fitness

Nutrition and fitness are important in the ongoing process of remaining smoke-free. Be aware of cravings for food, particularly sweets and fats, now that you are no longer allowing yourself the quick fix of a puff on a cigarette. In some ways, all addictions are similar. Try to resist replacing tobacco with compulsive eating. Instead, snack on healthy foods such as carrots, celery, raisins, and sunflower seeds, and drink lots of water.

One of the benefits reported by many ex-smokers is a dramatic increase in physical endurance. As your lungs clear up, you will discover greater ease in physical activities. Exercise is one of the best stress relievers. Find a physical activity that suits you.

Smoking and Our Community

Like many other marginalized populations, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community smokes more than the general public. This can be attributed in large part to the stresses our community deals with.

Although more research is needed, several studies have shown that for HIV positive people, smoking increases the likelihood of developing complications including pneumonia and emphysema. It is also likely that prolonged exposure to *secondhand* smoke damages the immune system.

Additionally, the bar culture continues to play a major role for many LGBTQ people. Being around alcohol or outdoor patios where smoking is permitted may be too tempting for some former smokers, so it may be best to avoid those places.

You may also decide at this time to take a look at your use of alcohol and other drugs. It is now believed that it is easier to give up all addictive substances at once in order to prevent relapse and to increase your success.

Make use of the tips in this brochure and find LGBTQ support groups and resources that help you stay smoke-free. Quitting smoking is a big step, and you deserve the support and encouragement to follow through and be healthy.