

HEALTH REALLY MATTERS

# Going Smoke-Free

---

## Quick facts about smoking

- Smoking is the leading cause of preventable early death in Canada.
- 1 in 2 people who smoke die from a smoking-related illness.
- Smoking greatly increases the risk of developing heart disease and lung disease and delays wound healing. Smoking is the primary cause of lung cancer and a contributor to many other types of cancer.
- Smoking decreases fertility, increases the risk of miscarriage, and increases the risk of the baby having a low birth weight and strabismus (squint eye). Children exposed to second-hand smoke have a higher risk of ear infections and breathing problems.
- Women who take a birth control pill and smoke are at greatly increased risk of stroke.
- Nicotine is the addicting substance in tobacco but it is not what harms your health.

## Benefits of going smoke-free

- It is never too late to quit smoking. You will gain some benefit from quitting at any age.
- Symptoms like cough and exercise tolerance improve quickly while the risks of heart attack, stroke, and lung cancer decrease more gradually.
- A specific quit plan and having support are hallmarks of successful quitting.
- Research indicates that anyone smoking over half a pack per day will benefit from using some form of medication to help with quitting.
- When you quit smoking, your liver processes some substances, e.g. caffeine, differently. Thus it is recommended that you drink fewer caffeinated beverages when you quit smoking.
- The earlier in pregnancy a woman can quit smoking, the less likely she will relapse to smoking after the baby is born.



**MEDICINE CENTRE**  
PHARMACY

## Medications for Quitting Smoking

- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): available without a prescription as gum, lozenge, patch, inhaler, and spray. Ask your pharmacist about any programs that might help cover the cost of NRT. Combination NRT can be more effective than a single form (e.g. patch plus lozenge). NRT can be used during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- Bupropion (Zyban®): a prescription medication that is taken twice daily. Adverse effects include dry mouth, insomnia, and, occasionally, strange dreams. Bupropion can be used in combination with NRT.
- Varenicline (Champix®): a prescription medication that blocks the effects of nicotine. It can cause some mild stomach upset and, less commonly, a negative change in mood.

## What about E-Cigarettes?

- E-cigarettes almost certainly cause less harm to health than smoking. However, despite not emitting smoke, the devices do have some negative environmental impact (they contain a lithium battery and plastic components). In Canada e-cigarettes are only approved for sale without nicotine-containing cartridges but the general public has been able to access them. Long-term health effects of 'vaping' are not yet known.

## Your Pharmacist can

- Help you develop a personalized quit plan, including determining which type of medication may be best for you.
- Inform you on how to get the most benefit from medication and deal with adverse effects.
- Refer you to local support groups or help lines.
- Determine whether dosages of any of your other medications should be adjusted once you quit smoking based on changes in metabolism or improvements in your health condition.

## Help Lines, Websites, and Apps to assist you on your journey to be a non-smoker

- QuitNow: <http://www.quitnow.ca>
- Canadian quitline (toll-free): 1-866- 366-3667
- Running Room Program: <http://www.runtoquit.com>
- Phone apps: Smoke Free; QuitIt; Kwit; Cessation Nation; Livestrong MyQuit Coach; Quit Pro; Craving to Quit; QuitNow; (there are many more).

---

## Notes: