

Create your own quit-smoking plan

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It's almost too easy to delay the day you'll quit smoking—almost any excuse will do.

But know this: Smokers who quit before their 50th birthday can cut in half their risk of dying over the following 15 years, according to the MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston.

As you get yourself mentally ready to stop smoking, it's important to recognize that—besides dealing with a nicotine addiction—quitting smoking means changing a deeply ingrained psychological habit. You can help this process along by identifying the situations that make you want to smoke and steering clear of them.

That usually involves making changes to your daily routine. For example, if you always take a work break with co-workers who smoke, you'll want to take breaks with nonsmokers or do something completely different, like go for a short walk.

Many people smoke because it helps them handle stress, depression and other [negative emotions](#). Look for other ways to handle these feelings, like exercise, meditation, relaxation and even simple deep breathing.

If having a drink makes you want to light up, switch to nonalcoholic beverages, munch on raw veggies, or chew on gum or even a straw when you're out with friends. Socialize in places where smoking is prohibited. Some people find it helps to give up alcohol—or soda or coffee—for the first several months to break the association between the cigarette and the beverage.

Let loved ones who smoke know you're trying to quit and are changing your habits to give yourself the best possible chance of success. Ask for their support by not [smoking](#) around you.

More information: The MD Anderson Cancer Center has a 6-point guide to [quitting smoking](#) to get you ready.

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