

Fact Sheet 97-39



Even though it has been reported that most adult smokers would like to quit, the number who actually do quit is very small. Why is that?

To answer that question, one must realize that making such a major lifestyle change is not simply a "yes or no" proposition. Instead, this type of change progresses in stages; a person must be ready and prepared to take action and make such a change.

Deciding to quit smoking is a very important first step towards reducing the risk of developing heart disease and cancer. It is also an important first step in improving one's general health and well-being. If you have made that decision, you have probably already thought of one or more personal reasons why you want to quit smoking. By making that decision, you have already started moving through the stages of making a change!

As one progresses through the next stages -preparing to quit and actually taking action to quit - any number of barriers to quitting can cause one to be discouraged. However, by identifying these barriers and then strategies to break them (or make them smaller barriers), one

can progress more rapidly through the stages from thinking about quitting to taking action.

WHAT ARE SOME BARRIERS?

Barriers can be put into three general categories of stressors that a person may experience or find difficult to handle in the absence of having a cigarette: (a) those that are addiction-related, (b) those that are internal, and (c) those that are external in origin.

a) **Addiction Barriers:** These are the barriers to quitting that cause one to focus on and crave cigarettes. They include the following:

- withdrawal symptoms
- feeling lost without cigarettes
- missing the "companionship" of cigarettes and thinking about never being able to smoke again
- having time on one's hands or feeling bored
- thinking it will be very hard not to smoke, but not knowing how long that feeling will last
- fear of failing to quit

b) **Internal Barriers:** These barriers to quitting come from within and deal more with how one handles stressful situations. They include:

- feeling pressured at home or at work
- having strong feelings such as anger or being upset
- not feeling in control of moods

c) **External Barriers:** These are things in the environment that might present themselves as barriers to quitting. They include factors such as:

- lack of support (from friends, family or work environment)
- environmental cues or reminders of smoking
- friends encouraging one to smoke

One additional barrier is possible weight gain. It is in its own category, since it has elements of both addiction barriers and internal barriers. Nonetheless, it can be a very large barrier to quitting for many people who are thinking about

quitting. (If you haven't already received it, ask for the Fact Sheet, "Weight Management after Quitting Smoking.")

HOW DO I BREAK THE BARRIERS?

Barriers are broken when you R.I.S.E. to meet them:

1. **R**ealize that you are capable of doing many things, including stopping smoking! If you have decided to stop smoking, you have already taken the first step in the change process (not always an easy decision to make). Review past personal successes, determine what made them successful, and use the strengths you gained from those experiences.
2. **I**dentify what stressors are your own personal barriers. Are they mostly addiction-related, internal, or external? For those things that are not barriers or only small barriers, you have already been successful at getting the coping skills you need. Prepare strategies that can help you deal with stressors you feel are larger barriers.
3. **S**et goals that are specific, attainable and related to steps you are taking to quit smoking. Measure your success in terms of the improvements you are making, not perfection. Reward yourself for successes, making sure to include "progress" in your definition of success.
4. **E**xercise the strategies you have prepared on the barriers you have identified. Anticipate different situations and make plans about how you will deal with them before they occur. When they do occur, you will be ready with a way to handle them.



BARRIER-BREAKING STRATEGIES

The following list shows you some example strategies. It is not a complete list, nor will each strategy work equally well or be practical for everyone. With that in mind, decide which strategies might fit your own needs. Use them to give you ideas about how you might change them so they work for you. Think of how you will use a strategy as you face a stressful situation **before it occurs**. When you are faced with the situation, try it out.

For addiction barriers:

1. Barriers like withdrawal symptoms and strong cravings are time-limited (lasting approximately two weeks); they will not go on forever. If withdrawal symptoms are a major barrier, consider using a nicotine patch or nicotine gum to help avoid them. Drink plenty of water to help your body get rid of the toxins.
2. Take a "trial run" to see what quitting will be like.
3. Decide **beforehand** what you will do when an urge to smoke hits. Make a list of several different things you might do, then do one of them.
4. List the reasons why you wanted to quit in the first place. If you begin to miss the "companionship" of cigarettes, review this list. There is life after cigarettes, and quitting is possible. This is proven by millions of adults who have become and remain former smokers. Consider a new hobby, pass-time, or activity you can add to your lifestyle to deal with the "loss" of cigarettes.

For internal barriers:

- Relaxation techniques like deep breathing or muscle relaxation help to reduce feelings of nervousness, irritability and tension. Take warm showers or soak in a hot tub to relieve tension.
- Get plenty of exercise! Exercise not only relieves stress; it refreshes you (something you often may have turned to a cigarette for). An added benefit is that exercise also helps control weight. Exercising regularly helps you physically and emotionally.
- Get plenty of rest. It is easier to deal with changes when you are rested.
- Even though a cigarette may temporarily relax you, smoking **doesn't solve the problem** to begin with. Figure out what might solve the problem and take action.
- Enjoy the pleasures and benefits of being smoke-free.

For external barriers:

Tell your family, friends and co-workers you are quitting and get their support.

- Make it easier to do what you want to do and harder to do what you don't want to do. Go places or put yourself in environments where you are not allowed to smoke. Think of behaviors you have usually done and associated with smoking, then plan how to do them differently.
- If possible and practical, avoid or limit the amount of time you spend in places or situations that are cues to smoke--especially in the beginning. These might include limiting the amount of time you spend with people who don't support your decision, or not going to smoke--filled places for a while.
- To deal with weight gain:
- The benefits of not smoking outweigh the average 5-10 pound weight gain experienced by many. Not everyone gains weight after quitting. Most people who gain weight do so in the first two weeks. It usually levels off by six month's time.
- Plan your meals and snacks. Planning will help you choose a healthful variety of foods, keeping low-fat and low-sugar items handy.
- Stay active! Schedule time for activity and exercise. A walk after lunch rather than a cigarette break helps break

the habit and calm the urge to smoke. It also helps you to control weight.

- Drink plenty of water.

SUMMARY

You have made the right decision to quit smoking. By reaffirming why you want to quit smoking, identifying the stressors that are your largest barriers to quitting. By developing strategies to deal with those barriers, you are on your way to arming yourself with tools that will successfully move you through the stages of quitting.

[Smoke-Free & Fit - Breaking the Barriers](#)

[Smoke-Free & Fit - Goal Setting and Preparing To Quit](#)

[Smoke-Free and Fit - Weight Management After Quitting Smoking](#)

[Smoke-Free & Fit - Eat For Good Health](#)

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