

Butt Out!



Stage Five: Relapse and staying smoke-free for good

You are now a non-smoker. You now know how to deal with cravings, how to resist temptations, and how to enjoy life without turning to cigarettes. Considering the effort you have already put in you should feel very confident about remaining smoke-free.

How to stay smoke-free

1. "I want to be a lifelong non-smoker."

Renew your reasons

- a) Write down your reasons for quitting and carry the list with you at all times. Look at the list to help renew your commitment to stay smoke-free and get you through tempting times.

and/or

- b) Choose 4 or 5 of the most important reasons why you decided to quit. Write each on a separate piece of paper and post around your house, car, work, or other places you used to smoke.

2. "I can change my behaviour."

You may still find yourself tempted to smoke. The best way to defeat these temptations is to avoid them in the first place.

- ▶ Avoid the places where you'll want to smoke and try new places instead (e.g., have dinner out).
- ▶ Avoid the activities that you associate with smoking and try a new hobby or sport.
- ▶ Avoid smokers who want you to be just like them. Make some new friends or rely on those who support you. Talk honestly with your smoking friends. Let them know you don't expect them to quit, but that you could use their support.

3. "I can control my surroundings."

When you were a smoker, you developed smoking patterns. You repeated those smoking patterns so many times that they became so automatic you probably lit up without even thinking about it.

If you want to remain a non-smoker, you need to reverse this training. One way to do this is to control your surroundings (instead of letting your surroundings control you).



Activity #1: “Who’s controlling whom?”

To help you identify potential trouble spots, do the following quiz:

	Yes	No	Somewhat
I’ve thrown away all my cigarettes, lighters, and ashtrays	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
I’ve changed my habits at work to reduce temptation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am avoiding places where people smoke a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I’ve changed my morning routine to reduce temptation to smoke	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I’ve asked my family and friends not to smoke around me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I’ve asked my smoking friends not to offer me cigarettes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I’ve replaced smoking with some other activity (e.g., walking)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you answered no or somewhat, you may be at increased risk for a relapse. You need to work hard to get your surroundings under control and change your old smoking patterns.

If you’ve had a small slip

If you slip and have one or more cigarettes, you may feel frustrated, angry, and/or discouraged. That is normal. Don’t lose sight of your goal. Get back on track as soon as possible.

Here are some things you can do to get yourself back on track:

- ▶ **Don’t panic or heap guilt onto yourself.** A slip or two does not mean that you have failed.
- ▶ **Remind yourself that your urge to smoke will not last forever.** It will pass if you wait it out.
 - When you feel the urge, see it like this: *“The urge to smoke is like a wave. Watch the wave coming toward you, then wash over you and then fade away.”* Practise an image that works best for you. When you feel the urge to smoke, you can use this image to overcome it. See the urge as a temporary event you can handle without giving in.
- ▶ **Change your routine.** Control your surroundings to eliminate all possible temptations.
- ▶ **Renew your commitment** to quitting by getting support from people you trust.
- ▶ If you slip, the best thing to do is to **look at what triggered the slip** and figure out how to handle it differently next time.

If you’ve had a relapse

It is important to know that a relapse is very common. Instead of feeling badly about it, put it behind you and move on.

You have proven to yourself that you can quit. The question is:

Are you ready to quit smoking again?

- YES NO NOT SURE

Getting ready to quit again

As you prepare to quit smoking again, recall your last attempt. **Think about what happened to make you start smoking again:**

1. What were you feeling before you lit up?
2. How did your family and friends react?
3. Why did you decide to continue smoking after that first cigarette?

You have a better chance of quitting this time if you can learn from your last attempt. As you learned from your last attempt, quitting takes self-confidence, preparation, and a wide range of skills. Your goal this time should be to improve in all these areas before your next attempt to quit.

Final Tips

- ▶ For the first 6 months after becoming a non-smoker, plan special celebrations on the monthly anniversaries of your quit date. Go out to dinner or to a movie with the family members and friends who have been the most supportive.
- ▶ At your 6 month and 1-year anniversary, review the pledge you made to yourself. Celebrate your accomplishment and calculate the money you've saved so far.
- ▶ Continue to reward yourself from time to time with the money you are saving by not smoking.

Resource: "For smokers who don't want to quit" – The Canadian Cancer Society, "Your Guide to a Smoke Free Future" – Canadian Council for Tobacco Control