

A close-up photograph of a calendar page. The date '20' is printed in black. Below it, the words 'Quit Smoking' are written in red marker. The '19' is visible on the page to the left.

Learning New Habits

Quitting smoking can be made much easier when you remove familiar old triggers and develop new healthy activities. Creating new routines to replace the habits around smoking helps to take your mind off cigarettes and find new ways to reward yourself with healthier habits.

New activities and routine

Smoking is a hard habit to break for many reasons. Not only is nicotine physically addictive, but smokers usually smoke multiple times a day. This means that you may connect smoking with many other activities and routines that make up your daily life. For example, many people crave a cigarette before or after eating a meal. To kick the smoking habit for good, it will help to develop some new routines that you don't automatically associate with smoking.

How do you develop these new routines? It helps to shake things up a bit.

- Do you usually eat lunch at your desk, and then head outside for a cigarette? Make a change, and start eating lunch in the cafeteria with friends.
- Do you like to have a cigarette before starting to cook supper for your family? Instead, try taking time to chat with a loved one or play with your kids. Not only will you avoid smoking, but you'll be reminded of one of the reasons you may want to quit: to set a good example for your family.

Choose new favorite locations

Research suggests that physical locations are some of the most powerful cues to behavior. To help yourself quit, think about where you used to go to smoke and take steps to avoid spending time in those places. Choose to go somewhere else instead, such as the gym to exercise. Use different exits and entrances and avoid places that you meet others to smoke.

List some places where you usually smoke:

Where are some places you can go where you won't be tempted to smoke?

Find new ways to socialize

Many people mix social time with smoking time. If you're one of them, then you need to find new ways to socialize. For example, if you smoke during your break time at work, you might find yourself joining in with a social crowd of smokers. Your reward: social time with your friends, along with the rush that you get from nicotine.

Instead of smoking, make a plan to spend your break time socializing in a different way. For example, you might ask a non-smoking friend to join you at break time to take a brisk walk. You'll still get the reward of social time, but without the cigarette.

Who are the people you usually smoke with?

What are some strategies you can use to not smoke with these people?

Building better habits to help you stay dedicated

Learning new habits for a smoke-free life is a great accomplishment. Just like running a marathon, earning a degree or losing weight, you can be proud of the steps you take to create the life you want.

As you change your habits you'll also change your perception of yourself. You'll begin to see yourself as the healthier person you are becoming, as someone who deserves to be treated with care, as someone whose long-term health is important.

Here are some new things you can try:

1. Be active!

Consider starting a walking program or start jogging or riding a bike. You can join a class at a local gym or try yoga. If you have a dog- taking them out for a longer walk is a great way to exercise. It doesn't have to be aggressive, just get your body moving.

2. Keep your hands busy.

Do crossword puzzles or play cards. Paint. Do woodworking, gardening, or household chores. You can also write a letter or paint your nails.

3. Enjoy having a clean tasting mouth.

Brush your teeth often and use mouthwash.

4. Stretch.

Take a stretch when you're tempted to reach for a cigarette.

5. Take breaks.

There are natural breaks even during a busy day—after dinner, first thing in the morning, or just before bed. Set aside this time for the activities that satisfy you and mean the most to you.

6. Get plenty of rest.

You'll need to rest and get plenty of good sleep while you get used to your smoke free lifestyle. Try taking naps when you can or just sitting in a quiet spot to relax or meditate with your eyes closed.

List 3 new things you will try this week instead of smoking:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

You'll soon find that the new rewards of not smoking far exceed your old experiences. You'll begin to enjoy fresh air instead of smoky air, an invigorated feeling from exercise and more time spent focusing on family and friends.

In the long run, you'll be glad you stayed dedicated to your new healthier habits!