



Canadian  
Cancer  
Society

Soci t   
canadienne  
du cancer

if you want to  
help a smoker quit



**ONE  
STEP  
AT A  
TIME**

Let's Make Cancer History

1 888 939-3333 | [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

## One Step at a Time print materials

### 1 For Smokers Who Don't Want to Quit (booklet)

Stage 1



### 2 For Smokers Who Want to Quit (booklet)

Stage 2



Stage 3



Stage 4



Stage 5



### 3 If You Want to Help a Smoker Quit (pamphlet)

#### Acknowledgments:

The Canadian Cancer Society extends its thanks to the Population Health Research Group at the University of Waterloo.

The Canadian Cancer Society would also like to thank Johnson & Johnson Inc. for its generous support.

## So you want to help someone quit smoking?

This brochure is for people who want to help someone quit smoking.

Supporting someone during the quit process is not easy. A big challenge is learning how to encourage them without becoming a “nag” and pushing the smoker off course. This will be difficult, but it’s a challenge that can also be rewarding for you and the smoker in your life.

Take your time when reading this booklet. When you read through the suggestions, think carefully about how to apply them to your situation. It is up to you to turn these ideas into something that works for you and the smoker.

## You can help, but you can't do it for them

The decision to quit smoking must be made by the smoker, for their own reasons and in their own time – not because they are being pressured from the outside. You can't do it for them, but you can help make the quitting process a little easier.

## Friend first, smoker second

Whether the smoker in your life is ready to quit or not, show that you care for them, no matter what you think about their smoking. They are your friend or loved one first, and a person who smokes second.

## Taking your lead from the smoker

Be sensitive to the moods and needs of the smoker who is quitting. At different times they may want help, want to be left alone or they may want to talk about their success.

If they slip back to smoking, don't make them feel guilty. Let them know you'll help them when they're ready to try again. How you try to help could have a positive or a negative effect. If you have ever thought about or have actually changed some part of your own behaviour (eating, drinking, smoking, exercising), you know that people around you who want you to change can be much more of a problem than a help.

When you are trying to support the smoker in your life, ask yourself if you are causing more stress or providing a steady source of positive support? Smokers don't respond well to pressure.

## Things that won't help the smoker

You cannot force anyone to quit smoking. It is not your decision to make, or your habit to break. Keeping in mind your goal to be a help in the quitting process, we've listed some things to avoid because most of the time they don't work:

- lectures or preaching about the health hazards (most smokers believe they have "heard it all")

- nagging
- giving ultimatums ("if you don't quit, we're through")
- put-downs
- guilt trips – offer support, not blame

Never suggest quitting is easy, make fun of a smoker or blame them. Remember it can be a very strong addiction.

## Understanding the smoker

Smoking is a powerful addiction for many smokers and quitting can be painfully difficult. For some, smoking helps them concentrate, deal with stress, relax and cope with boredom. Each smoker has their own reasons for smoking, and some aren't even aware of why they smoke. Whatever the reasons, each person will be motivated to quit by different things. And some will never want to quit strongly enough to become a non-smoker.

- Quitting smoking is not just about stopping smoking. It also means changing how you think and feel about smoking.
- Each smoker has to find their own time to quit, work through it in their own way at their own speed. Every "quit" is different.
- For many people, quitting smoking is the most difficult thing they will ever do. Others may find it easier to quit. Smoking is a complex behaviour and quitting is more than a simple matter of willpower.

## Understanding the quitting process

Quitting does not happen in one stage – people progress through 5 stages on the way to successful change. Some people may try 4 or 5 times before they quit for good and some people move back and forth between these stages:

- 1 Not thinking about quitting
- 2 Thinking about quitting
- 3 Preparing to quit
- 4 Quitting
- 5 Staying smoke-free for good

Let them know that you will continue to care about them no matter what they decide to do about their smoking.

The *One Step at a Time* booklets, *For Smokers Who Don't Want to Quit* and *For Smokers Who Want to Quit*, will support the smoker in your life through the various stages. In addition, smokers' helplines provide counselling and help during all of these stages. Call a smokers' helpline for a copy using one of the numbers on the back of this pamphlet.

Tell the smoker in your life that you care about their health and will help them quit when they are ready and if they want your help. However, some smokers will want to do it all on their own.

## If I'm a smoker, can I still help?

Yes

- You don't have to quit, but you can help the smoker in your life quit.
- Don't make fun of their preparations or attempt to quit.
- Support them even if it causes you some inconvenience.
- Help out by not smoking at certain times and places. Ask the smoker about when and where would be most helpful.
- Don't offer cigarettes or do anything else to encourage them to start smoking again. Let them make their own choice about smoking.

## Creating a smoke-free environment

You can protect your own health and support the smoker's quit attempt by changing some aspects of the environment. Creating smoke-free spaces in workplaces has had a major effect on reducing the number of smokers. In your home, you can create smoke-free areas. These areas will protect your health and help the smoker in your life.

## Has the smoker thought about quitting, but not yet set a date?

- Let the smoker choose their own time to try to quit – that is the only way they will be successful. Support their decision.
- Tell the smoker that you will think they're wonderful whether they are able to quit now or not until later.

- Whenever they bring up the topic of quitting, let them know you believe they can do it. Agree with them if they talk about the benefits of quitting smoking.
- Find out what resources are available in your community to help smokers quit, let the smoker in your life know you have the information when they are ready to use it. But remember the smoker must work through their decision to quit themselves.

### Has the smoker chosen a date to quit?

If they are carefully planning their quit attempt, they will be thinking about ways to deal with quitting. For instance, they might use substitutes to cope with urges to smoke, like walking, gum, mints and toothpicks. No matter what they choose as a substitute, don't make fun of it.

- How about giving up something yourself – candy, desserts or coffee? Keep the smoker in your life company. Making a change in your own life is a great opportunity to participate in the “change” process – as long as it doesn't turn into a competition.
- Help the smoker in your life change their environment if possible. If you are a roommate or a partner, try to prepare meals that include extra vegetables and fruit. If you can, suggest that the house become a smoke-free area. Having others in your home who smoke makes it difficult to quit.

### Is the smoker trying to quit now?

- Start by carefully listening to the smoker. Respect what they are feeling and doing at the time, without judging or offering advice.
- Ask what you can do to be of the most help – listen to the answer and do your best to respond to their needs. Don't tell them what you think is best.
- Be sympathetic about any physical discomforts of withdrawal from tobacco.
- The smoker may want to change some activities you do together for a while to avoid temptations. You may feel left out, but don't complain. Instead, join the smoker in other activities they find helpful or just be available to talk when they need you.
- Many smokers worry about gaining weight, and some will. Tell them they still look great. If they decide to eat differently or exercise more to help themselves through this period, help them do it.

Offering rewards can be helpful, but it can also make some smokers feel bad if they are not successful right away, or the first time they try to quit. So be very sensitive to what the smoker wants and needs.

### Has the smoker quit?

- Quitting can take a long time – offer your help and support when you are needed.
- Show them they can talk about slips and setbacks without you thinking they are a failure.

## What can I do if the smoker starts smoking again?

Don't nag or complain. Let them know you understand that quitting is a very hard thing to do and that almost everyone slips sometimes. Encourage them to keep on trying, but let them go on at their own speed.

### For more information

If you want to understand more about how people quit smoking, or you would like more information about the resources and programs in your community, call one of our information specialists toll-free at **1 888 939-3333**, e-mail us at **info@cis.cancer.ca** or visit our website at **www.cancer.ca**.

Smokers' helplines are now available across Canada with trained quit specialists available for free, confidential help over the telephone. Please call the toll-free number for your area printed on the back of this book.

This publication was made possible by your donations to the Canadian Cancer Society and through an unrestricted grant from Johnson & Johnson Inc.

Call a smokers' helpline at one of these provincial toll-free numbers:

**British Columbia**

**1 877 455-2233**

**Alberta**

**1 866 332-2322**

**Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario,  
New Brunswick, Nova Scotia,  
Prince Edward Island**

**1 877 513-5333**

**Quebec**

**1 866 527-7383**

**Newfoundland and Labrador**

**1 800 363-5864**



**Canadian Cancer Society**    **Société canadienne du cancer**

**Let's Make Cancer History**

**1 888 939-3333 | [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)**

This is general information developed by the Canadian Cancer Society. It is not intended to replace the advice of a qualified healthcare provider.

The material in this publication may be copied or reproduced without permission; however, the following citation must be used: *If You Want to Help a Smoker Quit - One Step at a Time*. Canadian Cancer Society 2007.