

Helping Someone Quit Smoking

Are you one of the many people who are worried about someone you love who smokes? It helps to know that smoking is more than just an unhealthy habit. Most smokers want to quit but they must fight physical and psychological dependency on tobacco. It also means that they must change how they feel and think about smoking, and adopt a new lifestyle. Because of this, your words alone will not convince a smoker to break the habit; the decision must come from the person looking to quit.

Quitting smoking is not just about stopping smoking or using smokeless tobacco. It's less about an event and more about a process over time. People who smoke or use tobacco usually move through 5 stages:

- Not thinking about quitting
- Thinking about it but not ready to quit just yet
- Getting ready to quit
- Quitting
- Remaining a non-smoker.

Sometimes smokers can shift back and forth between the stages before they actually succeed in quitting. However, there are things you can do to support the smoker throughout his or her journey of quitting.

1. Your family member or friend doesn't want to quit and might get angry if you suggest it. Let them know you care about them no matter what they decide to do about their smoking. Resist the temptation to nag, threaten, bribe or plead. Instead, talk to them openly about your concern for their health. You can also protect your own health by asking them not to smoke around you. However, don't make quitting the biggest issue in your lives.
2. Your friend or family member is thinking about quitting but hasn't yet set a date. Now is the time to listen. Help them find out what they like and dislike about smoking. Let them choose their own quit date and let them know you believe in them. If your friend or family member asks, let them know what quit resources are available in your community. Most local hospitals, Lung Associations, and Canadian Cancer Societies have cessation programs. They can also search the Web for a self-help program. Or you might suggest that your friend or family member see a doctor for smoking cessation aids.
3. Your friend or family member has set the date and is getting ready to quit. Express your congratulations, listen carefully to their plan and ask about things you can do to help. Resist giving too much advice or becoming too pushy. They might want you to be a "quiet partner" or they might need you to help them develop quitting strategies. You might also offer to sign a pledge of support that highlights specific milestones and rewards.
4. D day is here! Be available and respect what your family member or friend is doing without judging or criticizing. If it's appropriate, remind them that cravings don't last forever and that withdrawal symptoms are a sign of the body healing. Find new things to do together that might help relieve the discomforts from withdrawal like going for a walk, exercising, listening to music, going to a movie. Suggest activities that keep both of you away from other tobacco users or areas where smoking is allowed. Remember to listen to your friend or family member to hear what they need from you.
5. What if your friend or family member has a cigarette, a "dip" or chew*? Don't be too hard on them and don't nag or complain. Let them know that you understand that quitting can be very hard and encourage them to "keep on quitting". Remind them of their progress and let them know that it's just a bump in the road to quitting.

Remember: Use only the tips that your friend or family member needs. You can unintentionally sabotage their efforts if you come on too strong. You **can** be a big help to someone but it's not your fault if the smoker didn't make it this time. Don't forget to reward yourself for your efforts and congratulate yourself for being a caring person.

* these are forms of smokeless tobacco