

THE MCL GUIDE TO A SMOKE-FREE LIFE



Be Healthy, Be Smoke-Free

Dear Reader,

Congratulations on your decision to become smoke-free! This booklet contains relevant information that will help you through the process of quitting smoking. Remember that deciding to quit is one of the best decisions that you could ever make for yourself and for your loved ones. You may encounter some obstacles along the way but always remember that quitting and staying quit is POSSIBLE. God bless and here's to a smoke-free life!

I. THE BENEFITS OF QUITTING

Before anything else, let us look at the health benefits of quitting as identified by the American Cancer Society:

20 minutes after quitting...

Your heart rate and blood pressure drop.

12 hours after quitting...

The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.

2 weeks to 3 months after quitting...

Your circulation improves and your lung function increases.

1 to 9 months after quitting...

Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) start to regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs, and reduce the risk of infection

1 year after quitting...

The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a continuing smoker's.

5 years after quitting...

The risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, and bladder are cut in half. Cervical cancer risk falls to that of a non-smoker. Stroke risk can fall to that of a non-smoker after 2-5 years.

10 years after quitting...

The risk of dying from lung cancer is about half that of a person who is still smoking. The risk of cancer of the larynx (voice box) and pancreas decreases.

15 years after quitting...

The risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker's.

Aside from the health benefits, there are other things to look forward to once you've made the decision to quit smoking. These are:

- Increased savings - You will have more money to spare when you stop using your money to buy cigarettes or other tobacco products. Imagine how much you will be able to save in a day, a week, a month, a year. You can use the money that you save for other things that make you happy: out-of-town trips, shopping for clothes/shoes, or gadgets. You can even donate the money that you save to your favorite charitable institution.
- Better self-esteem - When you quit smoking, you will no longer have to worry about having bad breath or dark lips. You will no longer worry about your clothes or hair smelling of cigarette smoke. Being able to resist the urge to smoke will also increase your sense of self-control thereby improving your self-esteem.
- Health benefits for your family - Your act of quitting smoking will also ultimately improve the health of your family members and other people around you. By quitting, you will no longer be exposing them to secondhand and thirdhand smoke.

II. PREPARING TO QUIT

A. Identify your Reasons For Quitting

Quitting can be difficult. It is important to know your reasons for quitting because these are what will guide you and give you strength when you are tempted to smoke. Spend some time to seriously think about why you want to quit. Write down all your reasons for quitting then narrow your list down to what you feel is your STRONGEST motivation to quit. Write this down on a small piece of paper or an index card and keep it with you at all times. Whenever you feel the urge to smoke again, just bring it out to remind yourself of your major reason for quitting.

B. Understand your Smoking Behavior

In order to increase your chances of success in quitting smoking for good, you must also try to understand your smoking behavior. For smokers, there are certain things or situations that make them smoke. These are called smoking triggers. By understanding your smoking behavior and identifying your triggers, you may then take the necessary steps to modify your behavior and avoid your triggers.

Some smoking triggers are listed below. Check which ones apply to you or add your own triggers.

- Waking in the morning
- Drinking coffee, tea, or alcohol
- Smelling a cigarette
- Being with other smokers
- Seeing someone smoke
- Taking a break
- Talking on the phone
- Checking email
- Surfing the Internet
- Watching TV
- Driving my car
- Being a passenger
- After eating
- After having sex
- After completing a task
- Feeling stressed
- Feeling lonely or depressed
- Being or feeling less tolerant
- Feeling bored
- Feeling angry, irritable, or impatient
- Working under pressure
- Playing cards
- _____
- _____
- _____

III. START NOW

START is the acronym for the key steps to quitting for good, which are:

- S** Set a quit date.
- T** Tell your family, friends, and colleagues that you plan to quit.
- A** Anticipate and plan for the challenges/obstacles you will encounter while quitting.
- R** Remove all cigarettes and tobacco products and paraphernalia from your home, your car, and your workplace.
- T** Talk to your doctor about getting help in quitting successfully.

A. Set a quit date.

Once you have decided to quit smoking, choose your ***quit date***. Some people opt to choose a special occasion as their quit date, while others choose a date randomly. There is no hard and fast rule when it comes to choosing your quit date. The important thing is to decide on what date you will start being smoke-free.

B. Tell your family, friends, and colleagues that you plan to quit.

Since the process of quitting may become difficult, it is important to have a strong support group while you are undergoing the process. Tell the important people in your life of your decision to quit smoking and solicit their help and support in your endeavor. Quitting is easier when you know that there are people rooting for your success.

C. Anticipate and plan for the challenges/obstacles you will encounter while quitting.

If you are a heavy smoker, you can expect to experience withdrawal symptoms when you stop smoking. Smoking leads to nicotine addiction and dealing with the withdrawal symptoms may be especially difficult. Just remember that whatever symptoms you are feeling (coughing, restlessness, poor concentration, irritability, anxiety, insomnia) will get easier to deal with after a few days. Just strengthen your resolve about why you want to quit smoking.

If the craving for a cigarette strikes you, the 4 Ds may help in resisting the temptation to light up.

- **Delay** – Wait out your craving for a few minutes. It will pass.
- **Deep breathe** – Take deep, slow breaths. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Do this ten times.
- **Do something else** – There are many ways to distract yourself from your cigarette craving. You can call a friend or family member, exercise, or visit a non-smoking place that you enjoy. If you feel the need to have something between your fingers, you may opt to hold a stress ball, a pen, or even a rosary (if you're Catholic). If you feel the need to have something in your mouth, eat a lollipop, chew gum, eat celery or carrot sticks, or brush your teeth.
- **Drink water** – Take a drink of water. Sip slowly to keep your hands and mouth occupied.

D. Remove all cigarettes and tobacco products and paraphernalia from your home, your car, and your workplace.

Quitting becomes easier when you no longer have access to cigarettes. Get rid of all your tobacco supplies (including matches, lighters, and ashtrays). Be sure to check drawers and cabinets in your home, the glove compartment of your car, and your work desk. Check your bags or coats as well. You may have your curtains, seat covers and clothes cleaned as well in order to get rid of the smell of cigarette smoke. Visit your dentist and have your teeth cleaned in order to get rid of the nicotine stains on your teeth. These measures will help you on the road to becoming completely smoke-free.

E. Talk to your doctor about getting help in quitting successfully.

Visit your doctor when you are ready to quit. Your doctor can help guide you through the process of quitting and staying quit. Further referrals to specialists may also be made when medication is indicated in helping you deal with nicotine addiction.

IV. REWARD YOURSELF

Overcoming nicotine addiction can be difficult. Some people try several times before they are finally able to quit for good. Though the act of quitting in itself already comes with rewards, they are not always immediately felt. It would be helpful to come up with a list of rewards that you will give yourself for every day, week, month, etc. that you are smoke-free. In this way, you can encourage yourself and strengthen your resolve to quit permanently. The rewards need not always be monetary or material.

Below is a list of rewards that have been helpful to others:

- Staying up late to read or watch television
- Sleeping in on weekends
- Buying something practical
- Buying something frivolous
- Going out to dinner
- Going on an out-of-town trip

Create your own list and bring it out whenever you feel the urge to smoke. Knowing that something special is awaiting you the longer you remain smoke-free will motivate you to continue your endeavor to quit and stay quit.

V. STAYING QUIT

Prepare yourself for difficult situations and possible relapse. Recognize that you may feel the urge to smoke even when you have committed yourself to quitting. Also keep in mind that even "just one more puff" could lead to a major relapse. You may think that you are strong enough to resist the temptation to resume your smoking habit; you may think that just one puff wouldn't hurt but like they always say, "It's better to be safe than sorry." Do not risk it. Do not jeopardize the effort that you are making to be smoke-free.

Whenever you are faced with a strong urge to smoke, think about your reasons for quitting, remember the 4 Ds, and focus on the rewards that you have promised yourself.

What if you slip?

If you do slip, two things could happen: (1) you start smoking again, or (2) you learn from the experience and renew your resolve to quit and stay quit. The good news is that the outcome of your slip is entirely up to you. You could admit to yourself that you slipped and try to analyze what led to the slip. By analyzing why you slipped, you can better prepare yourself so that you will be able to avoid future slips. DO NOT, at all costs, regard yourself as a failure. Just pick yourself up

and start again. Do not dwell on the mistake, just stay positive and you will get to where you want to be – completely smoke-free!

Again, dear reader, congratulations on your decision!

Lao Tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step."

This here is the first step of your journey to becoming smoke-free. Good luck!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Useful websites:

- <http://smokefree.gov/free-resources>
<http://quitsmoking.about.com/>
<http://www.quit4good.com/>

Free Apps on iTunes, Google Play

QuitGuide
QuitSTART

For more information and guidance, you may visit the MCL Center for Health Services and Wellness or the MCL Center for Guidance and Counseling.

THIS GUIDE HAS BEEN ADAPTED FROM:

1. "When smokers quit - what are the benefits over time?" from: <http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/guidetoquittingsmoking/guide-to-quitting-smoking-benefits>
2. "Benefits of quitting." from: <http://www.stopsmokingcenter.net/education/benefits.aspx>
3. "Guide to a smoke-free life." from: [http://www.quitnow.gov.au/internet/quitnow/publishing.nsf/Content/799BB5A8F5E8C591CA257A0D001F11DC/\\$File/28062012%20brochure%20FINAL.pdf](http://www.quitnow.gov.au/internet/quitnow/publishing.nsf/Content/799BB5A8F5E8C591CA257A0D001F11DC/$File/28062012%20brochure%20FINAL.pdf)
4. "Clearing the Air." from: <http://smokefree.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/clearing-the-air-accessible.pdf>
5. "American Academy of Family Physicians Stop Smoking Guide." from: http://www.aafp.org/dam/AAFP/documents/patient_care/tobacco/AAFPStopSmokeGuide2012.pdf
6. "How to Handle Withdrawal Symptoms and Triggers when You Decide to Quit Smoking." from: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Tobacco/symptoms-triggers-quitting>