

Today is the day

A guide to quitting smoking





“Quitting wasn’t so horrible after all. As I was well-prepared, it was unbelievably easy.”

Quitting is always worth it!

Regardless of how long or how much you have smoked, it is always possible to quit smoking. Quitting is a decision you will not need to regret.

Or how would the following benefits sound?

- Less stress
 - Improved sleep
 - Improved concentration
 - Fresher breath
 - Brighter skin
 - Improved physical performance
 - Less coughing and other respiratory infections
- You can achieve these and countless other benefits. This guide will assist, support, and encourage you to move forward. Did you know that every second former smoker has already quit? Believe in yourself and you too can do it!

Contents:

Quitting is always worth it!	3
Get prepared to quit.....	4
Take small steps	6
This is how to do it.....	6
Be prepared for high-risk situations	9
What happens in your body when you quit?	16
Withdrawal symptoms are temporary	18

Withdrawal symptoms can be alleviated with medication.....	20
No need to fear weight gain	22
Smoking and other illnesses	24
Healthier babies and parents	28
Stop using snus.....	30

Get prepared to quit

The better prepared you are to quit smoking, the greater your chances of success.

Give it some thought in advance

Think about the pros and cons of smoking from your own perspective. Be honest with yourself and remember to list both the good and the bad things. In addition, think about the kinds of situations and places in which you like to smoke. Do you recognise some high-risk situations?

Make smoking more difficult for yourself

Do not light up a cigarette without giving it some thought. Change your smoking habits; changes break up the routine, and quitting will no longer feel like such a big thing.

Make use of your earlier experiences

Each attempt to quit smoking is a valuable experience that can teach you something about yourself. Have you tried to quit before? What happened? Why was your attempt unsuccessful? Think about how you can take advantage of your earlier experiences when you prepare to quit smoking. While some people manage to stop smoking at once, more often it takes several attempts to get rid of the habit for good.

"It's true that when you're used to having a cigarette in so many places and situations, you need to unlearn all the old habits."



Take small steps

Observe yourself: Every time you smoke a cigarette, write down the time and the situation you were in. This gives you valuable information on your addiction to cigarettes, as well as your smoking patterns.

Smoke less of each cigarette or limit the number of cigarettes you smoke. Cutting down even by a few cigarettes can be a big step towards a smoke-free life. Buy a small number of cigarettes, only one pack at a time.

Limit the places where you smoke.

Change your smoking routines. Get a different brand every time you buy cigarettes. Change your way of smoking: if you tend to sit down while smoking, get up; and if you usually stand up, sit down.

Stop smoking just as an experiment: Try what it feels like to not smoke for one day, for example. This will lower your threshold to quit.

This is how to do it

Decide in advance what your quit date will be. When you set the date in advance, it is more difficult to back out. While it is a good idea to ensure that your life is as stress-free as possible at the time of quitting, there is no use putting it off for weeks. This allows you to focus your energy on quitting smoking.

Ask your family and friends for support. People around you will be more supportive and understanding if you tell them what you are about to do and what their support means to you.

Find a support person. Ask an inspiring person you know to support you in sticking with your decision. Discuss all practical matters that may have an impact: leisure time, possible withdrawal symptoms, and the need to talk and get encouragement. If some of your family members smoke, agree on rules regarding smoking.

Be prepared for withdrawal symptoms and consider how you will handle different situations. Will you be able to handle the withdrawal symptoms or would it be better to alleviate them with nicotine replacement products? Acquire the nicotine replacement products in advance, if you need them, and read the instructions carefully.

Prepare some light and fresh snacks for yourself. Try sliced fruit or vegetables. When you get the craving for a cigarette, such snacks could save you at the beginning.

Dispose of all your cigarettes and smoking accessories on the night before. Do not leave a back door open. (At least, wrap your cigarettes and accessories in a tight packet that is difficult to open, and hide it from view.)

Reward yourself even for small successes. If you have a smoking relapse, don't be discouraged. Remember that it is just a small setback for which it is not worth giving up your goal of a smoke-free life. Slipping up is a part of life.

"In a way, thinking about failure equals preparing to fail. Prepare only for quitting successfully."



"I have learnt to eat a yoghurt during my morning break, and in the afternoon break, I get a newspaper to read."

Be prepared for high-risk situations

Smokers often reach for their cigarettes in certain situations, for example after having a coffee, during a break at work, or when they are feeling down or angry. By identifying your personal high-risk situations, you can plan in advance how you will handle them.

The following pages present the most common situations that trigger smoking. Read through them and consider how strong an effect such situations have on you.

For each situation, we have included practical tips to help you get through. As a rule of thumb, keep yourself busy and find something other than cigarettes to think about.

"It's great to read these success stories on the Stumppi discussion forum. It gives me faith that I might be able to succeed as well. No one, least of all myself, would have imagined that cigarettes and I would part ways."

"Slowly it begins to feel like even the impossible can become possible."

The craving for a cigarette takes you by surprise

Take a deep breath. Remember that even the worst cravings only last for a few minutes. Have a piece of chewing gum, a pastille, or something else fresh to chew on. Slowly drink a glass of water.

Feeling bored or depressed

It is common to feel down at this point. Remind yourself that it will pass. Don't stay at home worrying over things, but force yourself to get out of the house. Find something fun to do: call a friend, go see a movie or a concert, or take up a new exercise hobby.

Plan nice things. Think of the fun things you can do with the money you'll save. Try not to feel guilty even if you end up not doing anything special. Now the most important thing for you is to stay smoke free!

You're feeling nervous

Take a deep breath and relax. Avoid coffee and alcohol. Try to avoid situations and things that cause you extra stress. Don't stay put: get moving and go for a walk or a run, for example. Moderately heavy exercise will help you to relax.

You are unable to concentrate

Convince yourself that you are having difficulties with concentration because your brain has been used to cigarettes. Otherwise there is nothing wrong with your brain! Your ability to concentrate will gradually return. Reserve a bit more time than before for getting important work done. Avoid working when you are feeling tired.

Time passes slowly

Use the time previously taken up by smoking in a new way. Keep a list of things you have been putting off and complete a small task from the list.



"Luckily my brain is starting to understand that it's no use pestering me for cigarettes, because it will not be getting any."



"I have been reading threads on the Stumppi discussion forum as they encourage me in my own project of quitting. There I can find answers to any questions that have to do with quitting smoking."

You're feeling stressed

Plan your work in smaller segments that will not tire you too much. Every once in a while, get up to walk or relax by listening to your favourite music. Have some light snacks, chewing gum, and drinks at hand. Remember to get some fresh air, and eat and sleep well.

When you want to take a break or relax

Learn new ways to take a break: go out to get some fresh air or have a small refreshing snack. Learn a relaxation exercise that is suitable for you and can be performed anywhere.

You see other people smoking

At the beginning, avoid the company of people who smoke, as well as places where people smoke. When you see someone smoking, remind yourself that you have quit. Remind yourself of the harmful health effects of cigarettes and of the reasons for deciding to quit.

Someone offers you a cigarette

When you know that you will be in a situation where someone might offer you a cigarette, practise declining in advance. You can also think about how you will present your reason for quitting. This will give you confidence and help you manage the situation more quickly.

You end up in a situation where alcohol is on offer

At the beginning, avoid using alcohol in situations where cigarettes are on offer. Alcohol might influence your judgement and you might slip up and smoke a cigarette.

Coffee or food triggers cravings

Drink tea instead of coffee. Eat calmly and enjoy your meal. As quitting smoking improves your senses of smell and taste, food becomes more enjoyable. Do not linger at the table after eating.

You're used to smoking in the car

Clean your car and give it an airing so that it smells fresh. Have some chewing gum, pastilles, or something else to chew on while driving. Listen to your favourite music when driving. Take breaks.

You can't sleep

Get out of bed, as there is no use just tossing and turning. Read something, listen to music, or even finish writing your Christmas cards for the next year. When you stop smoking, your body begins to heal and your sleep quality improves.

You have a headache

Go out to get a breath of fresh air and take a rest. Cut down on caffeine and cola drinks. Try to relax. If none of this helps, take a painkiller.

Your stomach is not working

Remember to drink enough water. Eat plenty of vegetables and wholegrains. Get plenty of exercise.

Get support for quitting

You can get support from your local healthcare centre or your occupational healthcare provider. Ask about courses on quitting smoking or book an appointment to talk with a nurse. In addition, information and support to help you stop smoking are available online. Log on to the discussion forum at www.stumppi.fi for peer support. In addition, you can call 0800 148484 to reach Stumppi's free helpline for support. Calls are answered by healthcare professionals.

"It felt good having the carbon monoxide out of my system. I can breathe easier! I felt healthy. Even my step felt lighter."



"When I struggled with these feelings during the first weeks, every cell of my body was yearning for a cigarette. The discussions at Stumppi always gave me the strength to put off lighting a cigarette."

What happens in your body when you quit?

Immediately after quitting, your body begins to recover from the harmful effects of smoking.

After 20 minutes

- Your blood pressure will decrease.
- Your pulse rate will return to normal.

After 8 hours

- Your blood oxygen levels will return to normal and your body will get more oxygen.
- Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in your body will be reduced by half.

After 24 hours

- Carbon monoxide will be eliminated from your body.
- Your lungs will start to clear out mucus and other smoking debris.

After 48 hours

- There will be no nicotine left in your body.
- Your sense of smell and taste will have vastly improved.

After 72 hours

- Breathing will become easier as cigarette smoke no longer causes the bronchial tubes to narrow.

After 2-12 weeks

- Your circulation will improve.
- Your energy levels will increase.
- Coughing and mucus production will ease off.
- Lung function will markedly improve.

After 1 year

- The risk of coronary heart disease, heart attack, and related death will be reduced by half.

After 10 years

- The risk of lung cancer will be reduced by half.

In addition, quitting smoking

- Quickly increases the levels of good HDL cholesterol
- Decreases perceived stress
- Improves the quality and amount of sleep and might reduce snoring
- Reduces the risk of premature death from smoking-related causes by half if you quit at the age of 50; quitting at the age of 30 drops the risk of premature smoking-related death to nearly zero
- Reduces the risk of post-surgery complications (e.g. wound infections, pneumonia)
- Alleviates erectile dysfunction in one in four people



Withdrawal symptoms are temporary

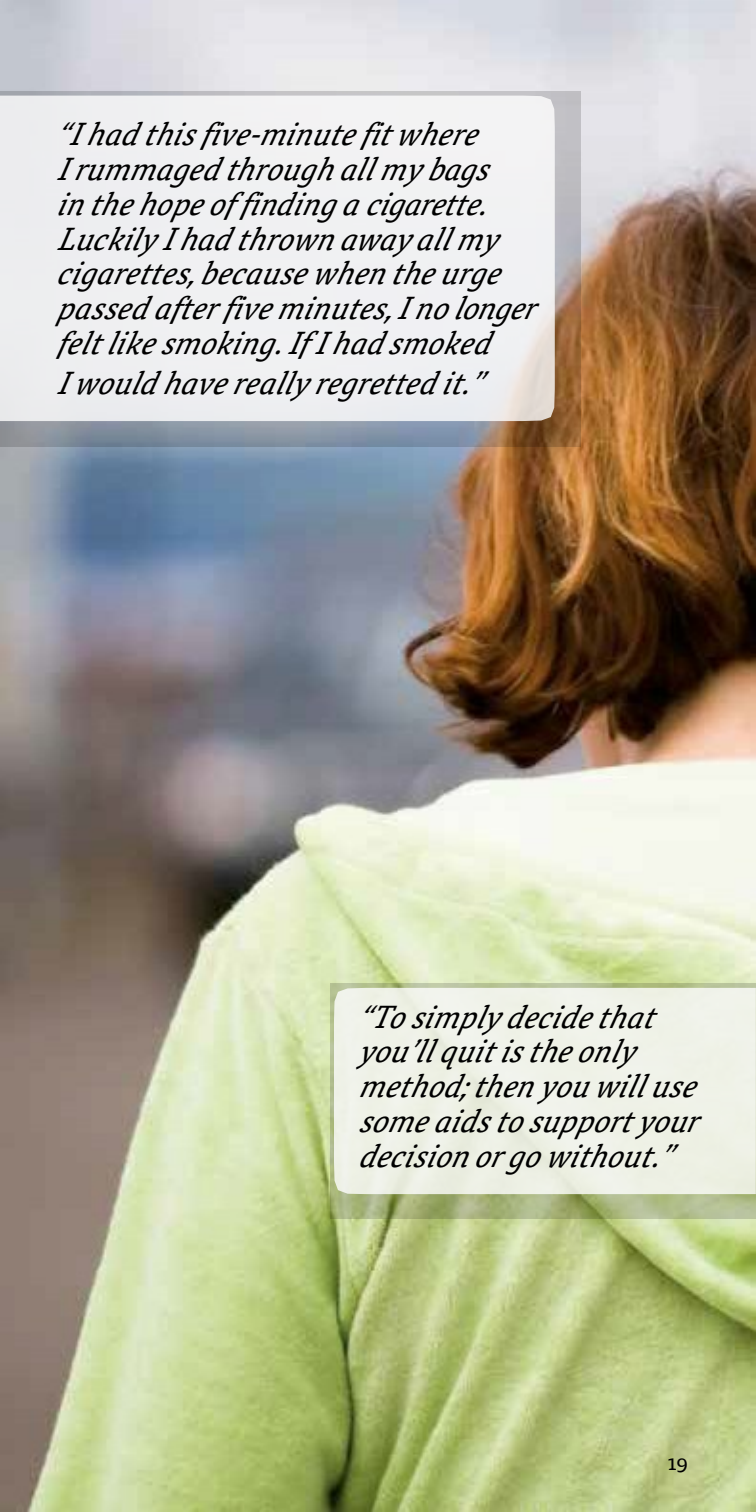
Quitting smoking might involve withdrawal symptoms. These are not to worry about, as they will be temporary and will certainly pass. The benefits of quitting, on the other hand, will be permanent. Try to take a positive attitude towards withdrawal symptoms, as they are a sign of your body cleaning itself.

Dependence on nicotine means that a smoker's body needs a regular dose of nicotine in order to function normally. When nicotine leaves the body, this might initially lead to various withdrawal symptoms. While the duration and number of symptoms varies, on average they last for 3–4 weeks. Usually the symptoms are at their strongest during the first week and then gradually ease off. Approximately three out of four quitters experience withdrawal symptoms. However, it is possible to quit smoking without any major symptoms.

The most common withdrawal symptoms include:

- Irritability
- Feeling impatient
- Cravings for cigarettes
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Problems with sleeping
- Headaches
- Increased appetite and cravings for sweets

Drinking coffee might make withdrawal symptoms worse, since caffeine leaves the body at a slower rate after you have quit smoking.



"I had this five-minute fit where I rummaged through all my bags in the hope of finding a cigarette. Luckily I had thrown away all my cigarettes, because when the urge passed after five minutes, I no longer felt like smoking. If I had smoked I would have really regretted it."

"To simply decide that you'll quit is the only method; then you will use some aids to support your decision or go without."

Withdrawal symptoms can be alleviated with medication

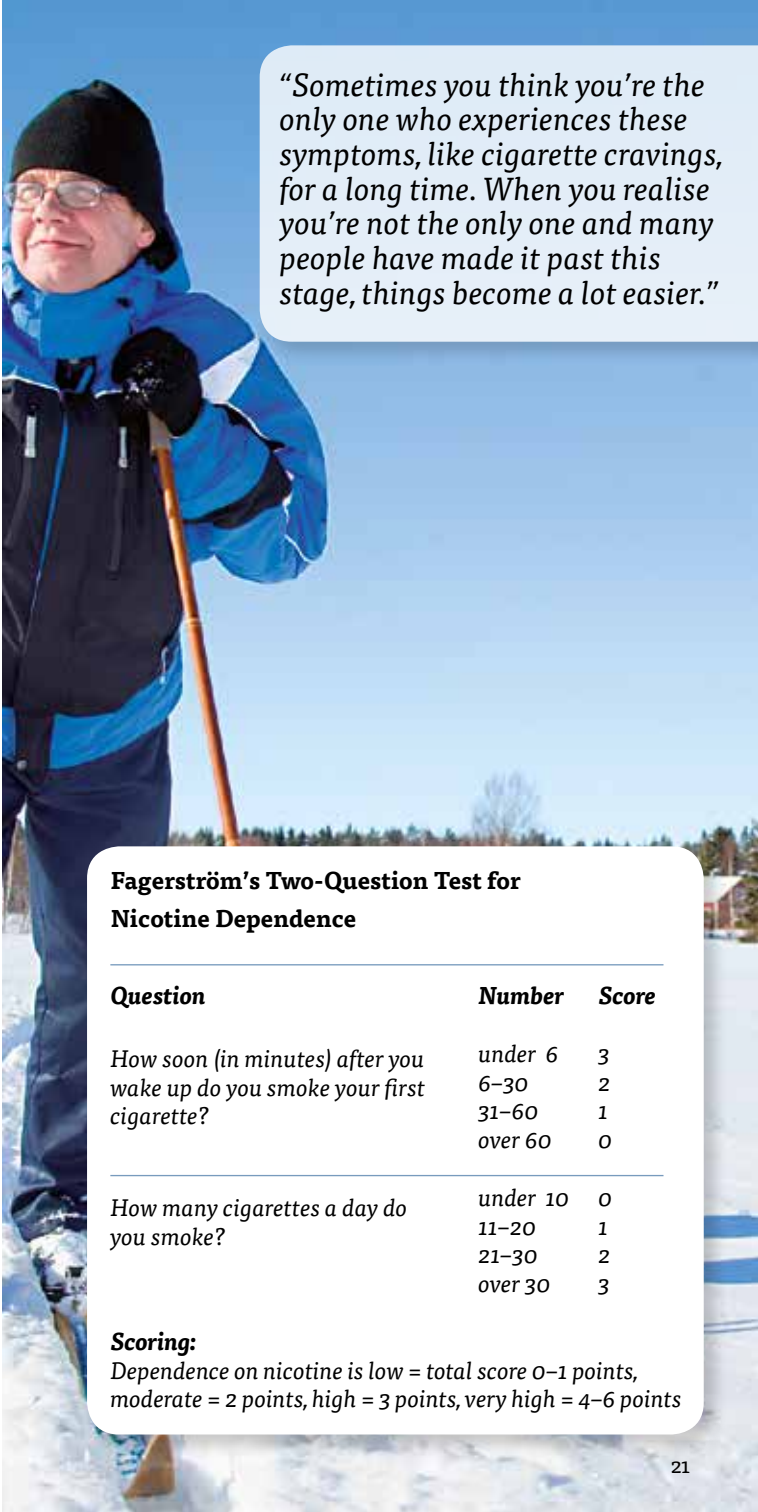
Withdrawal symptoms can be treated with nicotine replacement products or prescription medicines. The right product and dosage are chosen based on the level of dependence.

With nicotine replacement therapy, the blood nicotine levels remain lower than when smoking. The purpose of replacement therapy is to slowly reduce the amount of nicotine in the body, in order to manage the withdrawal symptoms while alleviating dependence.

Nicotine replacement products are prescription-free and available in pharmacies, stores, kiosks, and service stations. There are several different types of nicotine replacement products: chewing gum, tablets, patches, and inhalers.

Nicotine patches have a slow but long-lasting effect. The patch needs to be replaced once a day. Chewing gum, tablets, and inhalers have a faster and more short-term effect. They are used as necessary when you are experiencing withdrawal symptoms. Chewing gum and tablets are available in various strengths and several flavours.

Inhalers release a small amount of nicotine through the device into the air that you inhale into your mouth. Nicotine is then absorbed into circulation through the lining of your mouth. Nicotine replacement therapy is also suitable for those who want to stop using snus. The required doses are determined according to need, meaning the level of nicotine dependence. When using nicotine replacement products, it is important to take a sufficiently large dose for long enough (for 3 to 6 months).



“Sometimes you think you’re the only one who experiences these symptoms, like cigarette cravings, for a long time. When you realise you’re not the only one and many people have made it past this stage, things become a lot easier.”

Fagerström’s Two-Question Test for Nicotine Dependence

Question	Number	Score
How soon (in minutes) after you wake up do you smoke your first cigarette?	under 6	3
	6–30	2
	31–60	1
	over 60	0
How many cigarettes a day do you smoke?	under 10	0
	11–20	1
	21–30	2
	over 30	3

Scoring:
Dependence on nicotine is low = total score 0–1 points, moderate = 2 points, high = 3 points, very high = 4–6 points

There are also prescription medicines to help with withdrawal. In Finland, varenicline, bupropion, and nortriptyline are used for this purpose. While such medicines alleviate withdrawal symptoms, they are not suitable for everyone. Discuss medication with your doctor.

No need to fear weight gain

Many smokers are worried about possible weight gain after quitting smoking. For some, this might even be a reason to continue smoking. Your weight will not necessarily go up after you quit: you can influence this. Some people do not put on any weight, and most gain just a few kilograms.

Possible weight gain after quitting smoking is due to a decreased metabolic rate combined with increased appetite. However, the decrease in metabolism is only temporary and it will return to normal. In addition, you might also experience water retention in your body. Water retention will clear up by itself with time. If you watch your eating a bit more carefully for a while and make wise choices, you can quit smoking without putting on weight.

Quite often, quitting smoking leads to an increase in appetite. This is because food tastes better as your senses of smell and taste return. Feeling hungry and having an increased appetite are common withdrawal symptoms that last longer than other symptoms.

"Weight control is not an impossible feat and you can shed those extra kilograms, no matter whether you have big bones, faulty genes, or a presumably slow metabolism."



You can prevent weight gain with small changes

Eating a regular, vegetable-rich diet is important. Have several small meals during the day at regular intervals. This way, your hunger will not build up and you can avoid overeating. Make sure that you eat sufficient fibre and drink enough water. Favour wholegrains.


Reducing the amount of sugar in your diet helps with weight control and is also otherwise recommendable. Protein makes weight control easier by making you feel more full. With improved lung function after quitting, it is a good time to get more exercise. When your body works better and your fitness improves, exercise becomes more fun. So why not try out a new sport? Exercise also alleviates withdrawal symptoms.

Smoking and other illnesses

Quitting smoking is vital in the treatment of lung diseases. It will reduce asthma symptoms and the amount of asthma exacerbations, improve lung function, and enhance the effectiveness of medication. In chronic obstructive lung disease, quitting smoking is the most important method of treatment. It will significantly slow down the progress of the disease and reduce symptoms, as well as the need for hospital treatment. As your immune system improves, you will get less infections.

Quitting smoking is also very heart-friendly. Within a year of quitting, your risk of having a heart attack will drop to the same level as that of non-smokers.


Quitting smoking is one of the cornerstones in the treatment of diabetes. It will decrease the risk of diabetes-related conditions, such as cardiovascular diseases.



"If oxygen and my health were taken away from me, I would miss them more than cigarettes..."

"I feel better climbing up stairs, no coughing, my PEFr results have improved, and my mouth tastes and smells better."

"It's only now, two weeks after I quit smoking, that I achieved the flow everyone is talking about; my running is effortless and enjoyable."

A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a white t-shirt with pink text, blowing bubbles. She is holding a yellow bubble wand in her right hand and a clear bottle of bubble solution in her left. Numerous colorful bubbles are floating in the air around her. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting.

"My kids need a healthy mother and a good example for their own lives."

"Children are happy to have a grandmother who does not reek."

Quitting will also improve the effectiveness of insulin. Long-term smoking seems to increase the risk of depression, as well as susceptibility to other psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia. Smoking places a great burden on both the finances and the wellbeing of people recovering from mental health issues. Stopping smoking is possible for these people, too. With support, many succeed in quitting.

Smoking decreases the efficacy of many medications. Such medications include insulin, warfarin, and certain psychoactive medications. After quitting smoking, it is good to check with your doctor whether your dosage requires adjustment.

In addition, quitting smoking

- Significantly reduces the risk of developing cancer
- Improves oral health
- Reduces the risk of developing thyroid disorders
- Supports successful surgical operations and the healing of wounds, and decreases post-operative complications
- Reduces the risk of developing a stomach ulcer
- Improves the skin's wellbeing and slows down the formation of wrinkles
- Reduces erectile problems for men

Electronic cigarettes

The use of electronic cigarettes cannot be recommended. The liquid used in electronic cigarettes and the steam produced by electronic cigarettes contain substances that are harmful to health. We do not yet have enough researched scientific information on the use of electronic cigarettes in quitting smoking.


Healthier babies and parents

All parents want to give their children the best possible start in life. Quitting smoking is an excellent decision that benefits both your own and your baby's wellbeing. As the placenta does not filter harmful substances in cigarette smoke, a baby developing in the womb is not safe from smoke. Therefore, it is very important that the baby's environment and parents are smoke-free. It is a good idea to think about quitting smoking even before planning a pregnancy.

Why should I quit?

- It will be easier to get pregnant.
- The risk of complications during pregnancy will be reduced.
- The risk of miscarriage will be reduced by a half.
- Your energy levels will improve and breathing will be easier.
- Your baby will get enough oxygen and thereby a chance to reach normal weight.
- The newborn will be calmer.
- You will have more breast milk and it will not taste like cigarettes.
- The risk of sudden infant death syndrome will be reduced.
- There will be less childhood respiratory tract infections, allergies and asthma.
- There will be less learning disorders and hyperactivity in school-age children.
- The risk of the child becoming a smoker later in life will be significantly reduced.

It might be easy to decide to quit when planning a pregnancy. After all, your child's wellbeing is a major motivator to take care of your own health. Morning sickness in early pregnancy might also help to stop smoking. If quitting feels difficult, ask for help. Bearing the feelings of guilt alone taxes your resources.



"I have more time for my children and I no longer need to prioritise my addiction."

"You wonder how guilty you'll feel after the baby is born, and you realise that in addition to yourself, you've exposed the baby to smoke."

Stop using snus

Snus, or smokeless tobacco, contains many harmful toxins, such as heavy metals, pesticides, and carcinogens. Such toxins are spread throughout your body via the blood circulation. While in the mouth, snus damages the lining of your mouth, your gums, and your teeth. Damage in the mouth includes receding gums, dental cavities, and changes in the lining of the mouth that might develop into cancer. In addition, snus causes gum inflammation that makes the mouth smell bad.

Using snus also increases the risk of various cancers and cardiovascular diseases. Snus reduces an athlete's performance, endurance, and strength. Poorer circulation increases the risk of injury and slows down the recovery of muscles after exercise.

When you stop using snus

- You will get a cleaner, fresher mouth.
- Most of the gum damage will heal after quitting snus. You will also experience fewer gum infections than snus users.
- Improved intake of oxygen and nutrients will lead to better muscular endurance, strength, and mass.
- Your heart will become stronger and your athletic performance will improve.
- The risk of developing cancer, especially oral cancer, will be significantly reduced.
- The risk of cardiovascular disease will also be reduced after quitting snus.

The same advice applies to quitting snus as to quitting smoking. The key is to make a strong decision to quit and have good motivation. Usually snus users have a high level of nicotine dependence, so gradually cut down snus before quitting. In this way, you will experience fewer withdrawal symptoms. It also breaks up your routine related to using snus, making quitting easier.

Snus contains more nicotine than cigarettes. That is why switching to snus is not the way to quit smoking. Why would you replace one harmful tobacco product with another?



Stumppi helps you quit smoking



Free helpline at

0800 148 484 (in Finnish)

Calls are answered by healthcare professionals.

More information and support is available online at stumppi.fi (in Finnish).

Stumppi.fi



Photos: Shutterstock – Graphic design:

This guide was produced by the Organisation for Respiratory Health in Finland.

Quotes in the guide have been taken from the discussion forum on the Stumppi website.