QUIT because you CARE

WELCOME

Carers make a difference

Quitting smoking is one of the best things anyone can do to improve their health, including mental health.

Smokers living with mental illness tend to smoke more heavily than other people so are at greater risk of harm.

Quitting also lowers the risks to carers and other family members from breathing in second-hand smoke.

Supporting the person you care for through the quit process could be the boost they need to quit smoking for good.

THIS GUIDE WILL IMPROVE YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT:

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MYTHS
About quitting smoking

**MYTH**
Giving up smoking harms mental health recovery.

**TRUTH**
Quitting smoking can be hard, but is not harmful to mental health recovery. Research shows quitting improves mental health.

**MYTH**
Passive smoking isn’t really harmful.

**TRUTH**
Carers and other family members who breathe in second-hand smoke have greater risk of lung cancer and heart disease.

**MYTH**
It is too hard for people living with mental illness to quit smoking.

**TRUTH**
People with mental illness CAN and DO quit smoking with support, even if it takes several attempts.

**MYTH**
Quit smoking medications are not safe for people living with mental illness.

**TRUTH**
Recommended quit smoking medicines are safe and effective for most people with mental illness.
QUIT because you CARE

BENEFITS

Of quitting smoking for the whole family

Quitting smoking improves the quality of life for both smokers living with mental illness and the people around them. Health begins to improve from the moment a person quits smoking and continues to improve for years to come.

Improved breathing
Reduced anxiety, stress and depression
Less worry about your loved one's health
Lower risk of lung cancer, stroke and heart attack
Better health for the whole family
Less money worries – saving more than $10,000 per year

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STARTING THE CONVERSATION
With your loved one

Try asking these questions:

**What do you like/not like about smoking?**
Listen without judging. Show that you are interested in learning about their reasons for smoking and quitting.

**How ready are you to quit smoking/cut down?**
If the person you care for is just thinking about quitting smoking, but hasn't decided for sure, don't push. Remind them that your help and support is there if they need it and ask again at another time.

**What worries you most about quitting smoking?**
It is a good idea to find out as much as you can about quitting smoking, to help your loved one deal with their concerns and show that you care.

Once you have found out more about their smoking, ask:

**What can I do to help?**
Don’t assume that they want your help, or that you know the best way to help. Let them guide you.

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*Did you know?*

It is important to know that as a carer, you cannot make someone quit. The decision to quit is one they have to make for themselves.
TIPS AND IDEAS

To support your loved one

Offer lots of encouragement
Let them know that you are proud of them and that you believe they can do it.

Be a distraction
Make a list of things to do together to keep them busy.

Celebrate successes
Praise them for trying to quit, for whatever length of time (hours, days, weeks).

Stay patient and positive
Don’t judge, argue or criticise. This can make your loved one feel worse about themself.

Encourage them to get support
If they are ready or are thinking about quitting smoking, suggest they talk to the Quitline, their GP or a mental health professional.

WHAT IF YOU’RE A SMOKER AS WELL?

If you are a smoker, and your loved one is trying to quit, it’s important for you to:

✔ Always smoke outside and away from them
✔ Keep your cigarettes and lighters out of sight
✔ Never offer them cigarettes — even as a joke

Perhaps you could join their quit smoking effort. It will improve your health and also make quitting easier for them.

Did you know?

People who feel supported are more likely to quit smoking.
When a person quits smoking, even for an hour, they can get withdrawal symptoms as the nicotine levels in their body drop. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms include:

- Urges to smoke
- Feeling more stressed and irritable
- Restlessness and difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety
- Sleep problems

Many people confuse nicotine withdrawal symptoms with symptoms of mental illness. The good news is nicotine withdrawal symptoms settle down within 2–3 weeks.

Using recommended quit smoking medicines can lower withdrawal symptoms and help your loved one to stay on track.

**THE CYCLE OF SMOKING AND WITHDRAWAL**

Rather than relieving stress, smoking actually causes stress. Here’s how:

1. When you light up a smoke it tops up your nicotine levels
2. Nicotine levels drop and withdrawal symptoms appear, like irritability, anxiety and restlessness
3. Smoking another cigarette, quickly puts nicotine back into the body and takes away withdrawal symptoms
4. Nicotine levels soon drop again and withdrawal symptoms return

On average, cravings hit every 1–2 hours
MEDICINES
To help with quitting smoking

When used correctly, quit smoking medicines can double your loved one’s chances of success.

Nicotine replacement therapy
- Includes nicotine patches and oral products, e.g. mouth spray, lozenges, gum and inhalators
- Reduce the stress from quitting smoking by replacing some of the nicotine from cigarettes
- Are much safer than smoking, because they do not contain the dangerous chemicals found in tobacco smoke
- Work best when used in combination (nicotine patch plus oral product) for heavy smokers or people with ongoing cravings
- Can be used safely while cutting down to quit

Prescribed medications
Includes: Champix (varenicline) and Zyban (buproprion)
- Can lower or stop nicotine withdrawal symptoms including cravings, irritability, and difficulty concentrating
- Can make it easier for your loved one to quit smoking
- Are available on prescription through your doctor.

Did you know?
There is no single quit smoking medicine that works for everyone. Talk to a health professional to find out more.
PROVIDING SUPPORT

With smoking triggers

Smoking triggers are the people, places and feelings that make someone want to smoke.

**Here are some things you can do:**

- Plan to do things together to get their mind off smoking
- Avoid places where people smoke
- Keep them distracted

**Here are some things you can suggest:**

- Use oral nicotine replacement therapy when they get a craving
- Do some exercise, as this can lower stress
- Take 10 deep breaths, most cravings will pass within a few minutes
- Brush your teeth: having fresh breath can delay the urge to smoke
- Have a glass of water
- Call the Quitline or use the My QuitBuddy app

The cravings a person might face can be hard to deal with. Don't let them lose confidence in giving up smoking. Check in and let them know you support them.

**You might say:**

"I can tell this is hard on you, but I'm proud of you for sticking with it. Let's do something fun to celebrate how far you've come!"

"It sounds like you're having a rough day. How about we go for a walk?"

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**Remember**

Look after yourself as well – there’s only so much you can do.
HELPING SOMEONE
Through a slip or relapse

It's common for smokers to try many times before they can quit for good. The good news is that every smoker who tries enough times can become a non-smoker.

Relapse is hard for carers as well, but don’t give up on your efforts to support and encourage them to try again.

If they slip or relapse, let them know that it’s okay and that you still care.

Slips and relapses are normal
You might say:

“Giving up smoking isn’t easy and most people need several tries before they quit for good. I’m here for you when you are ready to have another quit attempt.”

Learning from the quit attempt
You might say:

“Slips happen. Don’t beat yourself up over it! Like anything tough, you learn as you go. Let’s see how we might get back on track.”

Offer praise for every quit attempt
You might say:

“I know it wasn’t easy, but you did really well to stop for that length of time. I guess it’s like a practise run for when you try again.”

Did you know?
When quitting smoking gets hard, telling someone they can do it can make a big difference.
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Here are some tips to guide you

Ready to Quit

**DOs**
- Stay positive
- Offer encouragement
- Help them de-stress, e.g. go to the movies or for a walk
- Celebrate successes, even small ones
- Encourage them to get support

**DON'Ts**
- Keep asking them how they are going
- Get annoyed if they are irritable when going through withdrawals
- Offer cigarettes
- Smoke around them
- Be judgmental or hard on them if they ‘slip-up’

Unsure about Quitting

**DOs**
- Ask about their concerns around stopping smoking
- Show you have heard what they have said
- Encourage them to get support

**DON'Ts**
- Lecture, nag or try to convince them to quit
- Count the number of cigarettes they smoke
- Constantly tell them why smoking is bad
- Smoke around them

Not Ready to Quit

**DOs**
- Encourage them to talk about their concerns
- Show you have heard what they have said
- Come back to the topic at another time
- Let them know that you will be there when they are ready

**DON'Ts**
- Argue or try to convince them to quit
- Count the number of cigarettes they smoke
- Get frustrated or angry with them if they are not ready to quit
Local Mental Health Service — have peer support workers and tobacco treatment specialists who can help you and your loved one to quit smoking

One Door Mental Health Service — www.onedoor.org.au run groups for carers and their loved ones on tobacco cessation

GPs and pharmacists — can provide advice about quit smoking medications

NSW Health Smoke Free Hospitals
Smoking is not allowed in or around any NSW Health facility. Free nicotine replacement therapy is offered to all inpatient smokers. Talk to a staff member if you are concerned about this policy in relation to your family member.

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