

QUITTING SMOKING FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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ASH POSITION

ASH is a health campaigning charity which supports proven methods to help people stop smoking. We do not provide counselling but offer tips on quitting and links to other sources of help and advice. See the [quitting](#) pages for further help.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What's the best way to stop smoking?

When you are thinking about stopping, talk to an expert about what's involved – e.g. helplines, NHS specialist centres, pharmacists or your GP. Find out whether one of the proven pharmaceutical treatments like NRT or Zyban would be right for you – they can double your chance of success, and are both available on NHS prescription. Get your friends and family involved as they can give you moral support. Then pick a day – like No Smoking Day – and stick to it. See: www.nosmokingday.org.uk for more details.

Q. What is nicotine replacement therapy?

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is the collective name for a range of products containing small amounts of nicotine that are designed to help people stop smoking. These include nicotine gum, patches, inhaler and lozenges. They work by releasing nicotine slowly into the bloodstream and help to counter the cravings which smokers commonly experience when they stop smoking. Using NRT doubles the chance of successfully quitting compared to using willpower alone. NRT can be purchased from pharmacists and is also available on prescription.

Q. How does Zyban work and is it safe?

It is not known exactly how Zyban (chemical name: bupropion hydrochloride) works as an aid to stopping smoking but it appears to interrupt the action of receptors in the brain linked to feelings of pleasure which are released when a person smokes. It is as effective as nicotine replacement therapy and studies suggest that it roughly doubles a smoker's chance of quitting. Zyban is safe for most people. The main

exceptions are people who are at risk of seizures (fits) or who have some types of liver disease. As Zyban is only available on prescription, your GP will be able to advise whether this is a suitable form of treatment for you. In the two years following Zyban's launch in the UK in June 2000, 58 deaths were reported where there was a suspected adverse reaction to Zyban. However, in almost all cases the deaths resulted from an underlying health problem linked to smoking rather than from the drug itself.

Q. Will hypnotherapy and acupuncture help me to quit?

Some people find complementary treatments such as hypnotherapy and acupuncture helpful as an aid to quitting smoking. However, there is little clinical evidence of their effectiveness. If you decide to try these treatments check that the person offering the treatment is a registered practitioner and be wary of claims of high success rates. Even the very best treatment programmes rarely achieve success rates of more than 30% so anything above this should be treated with caution.

Q. Is it a good idea to cut down gradually before finally quitting?

Some people do manage to cut down the number of cigarettes they smoke as a prelude to quitting but this is not a recommended strategy. What usually happens is that people smoke more intensively, taking more and deeper puffs on each cigarette in order to get the level of nicotine that they had become accustomed to. The best way to quit is to set a date and make a clean break. Using nicotine replacement products or Zyban will help to overcome the cravings associated with nicotine withdrawal.

Q. I am pregnant and smoke. What's the best way to quit?

Smoking during pregnancy poses serious health risks for both the woman and foetus. There are now specialist services to help pregnant women who need help in stopping smoking. Call the pregnancy quitline on: 0800 169 9 169 for advice. If you are pregnant, speak to your doctor before using nicotine replacement therapy such as the patches or gum. It's worth stopping at any time during your pregnancy as you and your baby will always benefit, and it's important to stay stopped afterwards. Get your friends and family to support you – and if anyone else in the house smokes, get them to stop with you.

