

**New York State
Smokers' Quitline**

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HOW TO:

TURN A RELAPSE INTO SOMETHING POSITIVE



Nothing feels worse than starting to smoke again after quitting. This is called a relapse. Some people who relapse are left feeling that they've failed; some get so discouraged that they believe they would rather smoke than risk another failure. However, the only real failure is when you give up completely your effort to quit your tobacco habit. So don't get discouraged! You can turn those negative feelings around and use the relapse to help you quit for good!

How common are relapses?

Relapses are a normal part of quitting. Most people have to experience relapsing; in fact, five or six relapses before quitting for good is average.

How soon after quitting can I feel safe from the possibility of relapse?

Relapses can occur at any time. Most relapses occur within the first 24 hours of quitting, but they are not unusual after seven days, fourteen days, thirty days or ninety days without tobacco. Although much less common, they also occur six months after quitting, and at the anniversaries of one year, two years, five years and 11 years of being tobacco-free.

How should I feel about a relapse?

Remember that quitting requires a lot of attention, effort and practice! People who are trying to stop using tobacco are often very critical of themselves. Go easy on yourself; focus on starting to quit again, rather than feeling bad. Remind yourself that relapses are part of the quitting process and think of every relapse as a learning opportunity.

What can I learn from a relapse?

- Instead of focusing on your relapse, focus on what you can do differently to increase your chance of quitting for good.
- Look at the circumstances surrounding the relapse and try to identify:
 - Why you smoked.
 - What triggers caused you to light up.
 - What situations caused you to want to smoke.
 - How to be better prepared to turn down cigarettes.
- Armed with this information, develop a better plan to prevent another relapse.

What can I do when I relapse?

If you find yourself relapsing, stop yourself as soon as you can and take back control of your tobacco use. To regain control after a relapse:

1. Destroy and throw away any cigarettes that are around you in order to remove the temptation to smoke. Your willpower may be weak following a relapse.
2. Think about the reasons why you quit in the first place.

3. If you are ready, set another Quit Date, and congratulate yourself for trying again. If you don't feel ready to quit, wait a few weeks. Identify and deal with the other issues that are making you feel unable to quit.

How can I avoid another relapse?

Very few relapses occur because of physical withdrawal symptoms. Know and plan for triggers that lead to cravings, such as:

- Pleasant memories of using tobacco or being with tobacco users.
- Places or situations where you regularly used tobacco.
- Excessive stress.
- Moments of self-pity, irritability, depression or anxiety.

Be prepared for high-risk triggers like being **h**ungry, **a**ngry, **l**onely or **t**ired (Remembering the word "HALT" can help you keep these times in mind). These are common relapse moments. Take care of yourself and satisfy these needs regularly.

To help yourself conquer tobacco cravings, use the Five D's below, and soon you'll be on your way to success.

R E M E M B E R T H E F I V E D ' S

D e l a y

D r i n k W a t e r

D o S o m e t h i n g E l s e

D e e p B r e a t h e

D i s c u s s W i t h A F r i e n d

Learning to be tobacco-free is a lifelong process. Understanding how to cope with life, relationships and stress without tobacco is challenging, but knowing yourself and planning ahead will make relapses much easier to avoid.