

ON QUITTING SMOKING (Be Free – Say NO)

Many people who smoke want to quit, but it is a very addictive habit, and they need a lot of help to enable them to give up smoking for ever. Everyone knows the health risks involved: diseases caused by smoking kills around 20,000 people every year in Australia; and that cigarettes are full of poisons and chemicals which directly cause cancers of the lung, throat, mouth, bladder and kidneys, etc.

If you have a close friend or relative who smokes, you can help them by giving them some simple guidelines to follow, and be a strong support to them throughout the quitting process. There are nicotine patches or chewing gum, etc. available, but these can also become addictive, and prolong the process.

Most people who successfully quit do it by setting a firm date, and gradually lowering their intake until that date, and then stop completely. This is called “cold turkey”, and while there will be some withdrawal symptoms, much like having a bad dose of flu, they will gradually ease. However, cravings will be there for a long time – they do not go quickly.

When cravings come, as they will, there are some tried and proven tips:

- 1/ **Say a quick PRAYER and ask for help from God or a friend.**
- 2/ **DELAY for few minutes while the urge passes.**
- 3/ **DRINK WATER, a few sips at a time quite slowly.**
- 4/ **DEEP BREATHE, take about ten or more big ones.**
- 5/ **DO SOMETHING ELSE.** Keep your hands busy with a new project, or doodle with a notebook and pen, make a list of times you get cravings and try to work out why you wanted a cigarette. You can then plan things to do at the most risky times.

Remember that just one cigarette will do damage, but if a relapse occurs, encourage the person to start off again, and that all isn't lost. Most people have a few minor relapses, but avoid them if possible. As a supporter, you can keep on encouraging them, and treat them very gently, as they may get annoyed easily. Do as many helpful things as you can for them, especially during the first three days which are the worst, then it gradually becomes easier.

Encourage them to have a simple diet while quitting, with lots of fresh fruit and vegetables, plus plenty of juices, especially carrot and orange juice, freshly squeezed. They are known to assist really well. Also avoid all alcohol, tea, coffee, cola or any caffeine drinks. These create the urge to smoke. Herbal teas, decaffeinated coffees, etc are OK. Drink plenty of water and take regular gentle exercise like walking in the outdoors. Perhaps accompany your friend to places which exclude smoking.

Relaxation CDs, or massage can also help, plus a change in regular routines. Stress balls can be gently squeezed to keep hands busy. Have sugar free snacks like popcorn or chewing gum readily available. Keep away from social places where alcohol is served. If increased coughing occurs, this is a good sign, and should be viewed as the lungs repairing themselves by getting rid of some of the “gunk”.

REMEMBER.... Every craving only lasts a few minutes and the 5 tips given above will get them through each time. These are really important and as a supporter, you can keep on reminding them about these: PRAY – DELAY – DRINK WATER – DEEP BREATHE – DO SOMETHING ELSE. Write these tips out and place on the fridge, and on mirrors etc. throughout the house. Best wishes to the new non-smokers!

By Margaret Martin, President, WCTU, West Australia, May, 2007