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Top Tips for Quitting Smoking



We all know smoking is bad for us. It's been linked with all kinds of diseases, including stroke. But sometimes even the cold hard facts aren't enough to make us want to kick the habit. If you're considering cutting down or giving up, keep in mind these positive thoughts to help you along the way...

Tip #1 think of the health benefits

People who smoke are three or four times more likely to have a stroke than those who don't (1). It has been identified as one of ten modifiable risk factors for stroke: a small thing you can change in your life, such as losing weight or exercising, that will lower your risk of stroke (2). Every time you're tempted to pick up the packet, think of the extra time you'll have to enjoy life with your family.

Tip #2 the support to stop smoking is out there

Giving up smoking is really tough, but there is lots of support available, if you need it. Apart from talking to your doctor or pharmacist, who can recommend nicotine supplements such as patches and gum, most countries have national smoking helplines or websites where you can get more help and advice. Having a partner who smokes also increases your risk of having a stroke, so the benefits of quitting are there for everyone (3). Get family and friends on board to help you every step of the way.

Tip #3 treat yourself with the money you save

The cost of stroke in Europe is around €60 billion and, if everyone stopped smoking, our health services could save a large percentage of the money spent on stroke care (4). Think of the money you could save, too. Why not start saving the money you'd normally spend on cigarettes and treat yourself to something special at the end of each month. The benefits really add up.

Tip #4 the longer you give up, the bigger the difference

You might not notice a massive difference as soon as you give up smoking, but your body will. Within eight hours your oxygen levels return to normal and nicotine levels reduce by more than half. After between three and nine months,

your lung function improves and, after a year, your risk of heart attack is reduced. 15 years on and your risk of having a stroke is about the same as someone who has never been a smoker. All great reasons to try to stop smoking (5).

Tip #5 even cutting down is good for you

For over 20 years, studies have shown the risk of smoking and stroke are dose dependent. In other words, the more you smoke, the higher your risk of stroke. In fact, one study highlighted a measurable increase in risk between someone who smokes ten cigarettes a day and others who smoke twenty. The risk was increased by 12% for each increment of five cigarettes per day (3). Therefore, even cutting down could be hugely beneficial to your health.

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