

Supporting Older Adults in Quitting Smoking

Older adults age 65+ make up nearly 20% of people who smoke in BC. How can you best support older adults in quitting smoking?

WHAT CHALLENGES DO OLDER ADULTS FACE TO QUITTING SMOKING?

- 1 High dependence: Older adults often smoke more heavily and have been smoking for many years.
- 2 Belief that “the damage is done”: Many older adults believe that it does not matter anymore if they quit since they have been smoking for so long.
- 3 Some may have tried to quit many times before and not had success, which can lower their confidence and discourage future quit attempts.
- 4 Aging and potential cognitive impairment can make quitting more difficult.



WHY IS QUITTING IMPORTANT FOR OLDER ADULTS?

Older adults may face increased health risks from smoking. For example, if you are an older adult who smokes, you are:

- More likely to have chronic diseases that can be aggravated by smoking
- Twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's or dementia
- At higher risk of osteoporosis and more susceptible to injuries
- More likely to get the flu and other respiratory illnesses

THE GOOD NEWS: THERE ARE SO MANY BENEFITS TO QUITTING!

Quitting lowers your risks of:

- Heart disease and stroke
- Lung diseases
- Lung, mouth, pancreas, and kidney cancers

Other benefits include:

- Improved surgical outcomes and faster healing
- Needing fewer medications
- Easier breathing

HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT OLDER ADULTS IN QUITTING SMOKING?

Emphasize the importance of quitting.

- *“No matter your age, you will improve your health and your life by quitting smoking”.*
- *“Quitting can help you heal from [upcoming surgery] or improve [chronic condition]”.*

Help them feel confident in their ability to quit.

- Use past quit attempts as learning opportunities rather than failures. *“Have you tried to quit before? What worked well in the past?”*
- Help them set a quit date and make a quit plan.

Know which quit aids to use.

- Consider trying Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT). NRT may work better in older age than varenicline or bupropion.
 - Try the patch first.
 - The patch can reduce discomfort from nicotine withdrawal.
 - The patch works for patients not ready to quit or who want to reduce.
 - For short-acting NRT, the mouth spray is recommended over the gum or lozenge for those with cognitive impairments.
 - Those with cognitive impairments may accidentally chew the gum or lozenge like candy.
- If you have been smoking for a long time, you may need a higher dose of NRT because you are likely more highly dependent on nicotine.

Refer to QuitNow

QuitNow's expert Quit Coaches work one-on-one with patients throughout their quit journey.



Visit quitnow.ca/referral to refer a patient to [QuitNow](https://quitnow.ca)

quitnow.ca