

# SMART STEPS

**to explore your  
curiosity**



quitnow.ca

 BC LUNG  
FOUNDATION

# Curious about moving away from tobacco and nicotine?

Are you curious about what a life without tobacco and nicotine would look like? How would it affect your health, savings, lifestyle or relationships?

**This booklet is designed for people at the beginning of their quit journeys. Maybe you are:**

- Thinking about quitting or reducing tobacco, vaping, or other nicotine products
- Wanting to quit or reduce but don't feel ready
- Not interested in quitting or reducing right now

**You are in the right place.**



**This booklet provides useful information on:**

- Exploring your relationship with tobacco and nicotine
- Understanding how smoking or vaping affects you
- Exploring your motivations
- Benefits of quitting or reducing

**Note on traditional tobacco:**

We acknowledge that traditional tobacco plays an important role in healing practices, rituals, ceremonies, and prayers for many Indigenous communities across Canada. At QuitNow, our work focuses on addressing the use of commercial tobacco products, which are mass-produced by the nicotine industry and contain harmful additives. Any references to tobacco refer to commercial products like cigarettes, cigars, heated tobacco (e.g., IQOS), chewing tobacco, smokeless tobacco (e.g., snuff, snus, and recreational use of oral nicotine pouches outside of nicotine replacement therapy), and e-cigarettes.

# Explore your relationship with tobacco and nicotine

Your relationship with smoking or vaping is very personal. When you smoke or vape, it becomes part of your routine and your lifestyle. This section will help you better understand your relationship with smoking and vaping.

## Why do you smoke or vape?

There are **many reasons** people start to smoke or vape and why they keep smoking or vaping.



## Why people smoke or vape

To socialize with friends or colleagues

To relieve stress, anxiety, or feel relaxed

To take a break at school or work

To help with short-term focus

For fun or experimentation

For taste or the way it feels

Part of a habit or routine

Some people may vape to quit smoking. If that worked for you, that's a meaningful step. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. We recommend quitting vaping eventually as well, as it also carries health risks.

**REFLECT:** Why did you start smoking or vaping? Why do you keep smoking or vaping?

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## How often do you smoke or vape?

**ACTIVITY:** Track your smoking or vaping

Smoking or vaping can become so routine that you stop noticing how often you are doing it. Try tracking each time you smoke or vape for a couple of days. This can help you to better understand how much time you spend smoking or vaping, how often you smoke or vape, and how you are feeling when you pick up the cigarette or vape.

Use the **Tally Sheet** to record when and where you are smoking or vaping for a couple of days. See if you notice any patterns in your behaviour.



Time & Date	Cig/vape session #	Craving level from 1-3	Mood (e.g., sad, happy)	Activity (what you are doing, who you are with)

**REFLECT:** What did you learn? When do you smoke or vape the most, and the least? What feelings or activities lead to smoking or vaping?

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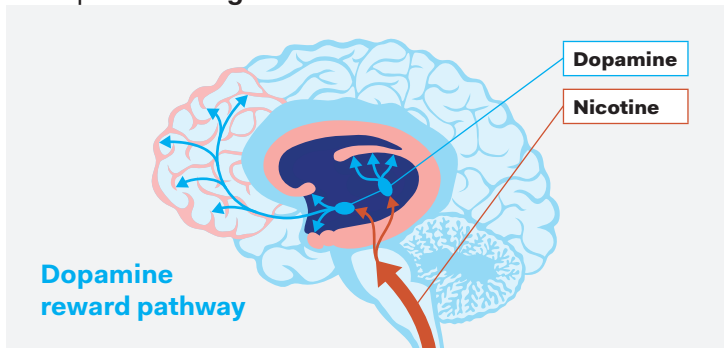
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## Understanding Nicotine Addiction

Regardless of why you started smoking or vaping, it is likely that part of the reason you have continued to smoke or vape is because nicotine is highly addictive.

### About nicotine addiction

- Nicotine reaches the brain in less than **7 to 10 seconds** after being inhaled
- Nicotine can be **more addictive** than alcohol, cannabis or cocaine
- Some vape pods can contain the same amount of nicotine as a pack of **20 cigarettes or more**.



**Nicotine** causes your brain to release **dopamine**, the “**feel-good chemical**”. It can also temporarily improve your concentration and make you feel more relaxed.



This feeling is only temporary, though, and when it goes away, your body wants more. This can lead to feeling stressed or agitated, prompting you to smoke or vape again.

Over time, your brain gets used to receiving nicotine from cigarettes or vapes and starts to crave it. This makes you dependent on nicotine, meaning **you need more and more nicotine to feel 'good'**.

When you stop smoking or vaping, your nicotine levels drop and you go into withdrawal. During withdrawal, you can experience unpleasant symptoms such as irritability, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating. The only things that will relieve these symptoms are either more nicotine, or time without nicotine (quitting).

## QUIZ: How addicted are you?

Use this quiz to measure your level of nicotine dependence.\*

1. How soon after you wake up do you smoke your first cigarette/use your vape?	Within 5 minutes	3
	Within 6-30 minutes	2
	Within 31-60 minutes	1
	60 minutes+	0
2. Do you find it difficult not to smoke/vape in places you should not, like a church, library, school, movie theater, or hospital?	Yes	1
	No	0
3. Which cigarette/vape session would you hate to give up most?	The first one in the morning	1
	During or after meals	0
	During or after stressful situations	0
	None of the above	0
4. How many cigarettes do you smoke per day? Or, how many times per day do you use your vape? (Assume that one "time" consists of around 15 puffs or lasts around 10 minutes)	10 or fewer	0
	11 to 20	1
	21 to 30	2
	31 or more	3
5. Do you smoke/vape more in the morning than during the rest of the day?	Yes	1
	No	0
6. Do you smoke/vape even if you are so sick that you are in bed?	Yes	1
	No	0
<b>Add up your score...</b>	<b>Total</b>	

If you scored between **0-2**, you have a low dependence on nicotine. If you scored between **3-4**, you have a low to moderate dependence. If you scored between **5-7**, you have a moderate dependence on nicotine. If you scored between **8-10**, you have a high dependence.

\*Source: Piper, M.E., Baker, T.B., Benowitz, N.L., Smith, S.S., & Jorenby, D.E. (2020). E-cigarette dependence measures in dual users: reliability and relations with dependence criteria and e-cigarette cessation. *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*, 22(5), 756-763.

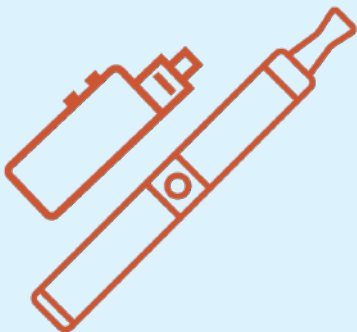
# Learn how smoking and vaping affect you

Smoking and vaping can affect your health, your finances, your relationships, and your lifestyle.

## What's in a cigarette?

There are over **7000 chemicals** in commercial tobacco smoke. Many of these chemicals are toxic, such as tar and carbon monoxide, and at least **70 are cancer-causing**. Some of these chemicals exist naturally in the tobacco plant, while others form when tobacco is burned. Cigarette companies also add chemicals to their products to mask the harsh flavour of smoke, making it feel smoother and easier to inhale. This can encourage deeper inhalation or more frequent use, increasing the risk of addiction.

- **Ammonia** - used in household cleaner
- **Arsenic** - used in rat poison
- **Benzene** - found in glues, rubber, and gasoline
- **Butane** - used in lighter fluid
- **Carbon monoxide** - released in car exhaust fumes
- **Formaldehyde** - used to preserve dead tissues
- **Nicotine** - a highly addictive chemical
- **Tar** - a sticky residue that damages lungs



## What's in a vape?

Most e-cigarettes have **nicotine, flavourings, and many other chemicals** in them. When you heat e-liquids, the chemicals can react with each other and form new ones. Some chemicals in vaping products include:

- **Propylene glycol** (found in antifreeze) and **vegetable glycerine** (found in cosmetics)
- **Ultrafine particles** that can be inhaled deep into the lungs
- **Volatile organic compounds**
- **Cancer-causing chemicals** such as formaldehyde and acrolein
- **Heavy metals** such as nickel, tin, and lead

# Health effects of smoking

**Smoking is the leading cause of early death and diseases in Canada.** It harms nearly every organ of the body and can cause serious health issues including cancer, lung disease, and heart disease. People who are exposed to secondhand smoke are also at risk.

## Smoking affects the body from head to toe

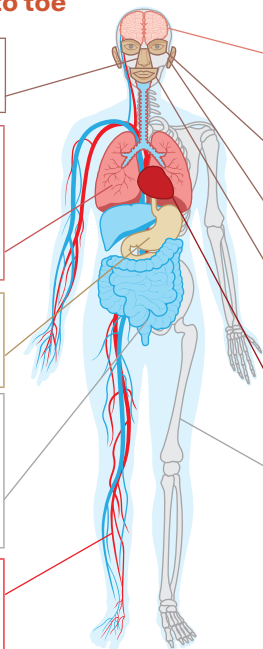
**Nose** - Reduced sense of smell, nasal irritation, more colds and infections

**Lungs** - Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung cancer

**Stomach** - Heartburn, peptic ulcers, gallstones, Crohn's disease, stomach and colon cancers

**Reproductive system** - Reduced fertility (e.g., sperm and egg damage), erectile dysfunction, menstrual changes, miscarriage and pregnancy complications

**Blood** - High blood pressure, reduced blood oxygen, high white blood cell count, weakened immune system, blood cancer



**Brain** - Addiction, stroke, poor mental wellbeing, impaired cognitive functions (e.g., learning, memory, problem-solving, motor functioning), dementia

**Eyes** - Cataracts, retinal diseases, glaucoma, loss of vision, blindness

**Ears** - Ear infections, hearing loss

**Mouth** - Dry mouth, bad breath, stained teeth, cavities, gum infections, gum disease, oral cancer

**Heart** - Poor circulation, heart diseases, heart attack

**Bones** - Weakened bones, fractures

**Smoking increases your risk of over 40 diseases, including at least 16 different types of cancer.**

## Health risks of vaping

We are still learning about the health risks of vaping. Current research shows that **vaping can harm your brain, heart, and lungs**. It may also increase your risk of chronic lung diseases, heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. People have also experienced acute (sudden) lung injuries linked to vaping.

**REFLECT:** How does smoking or vaping make you feel?

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## Other ways that smoking and vaping may affect you

Smoking and vaping may affect other areas of your life:



**Your social life:** Smoking or vaping can influence who you date, who your friends are, and the places you go.



**Your lifestyle:** Smoking or vaping can take up your time and energy. You may spend time and energy worrying about your vaping, wondering where you can smoke next, and buying cigarettes or vapes.

Smoking or vaping can also affect your energy levels. Things like walking up the stairs, playing with your kids, or working out may be more difficult.



**Your finances:** Smoking or vaping is expensive and the cost can add up over time.

## What does smoking or vaping cost?

Smoking and vaping can take a toll on your bank account. For example, someone who smokes 1 pack of cigarettes (20 cigarettes) a day that cost approximately \$15/pack is spending **\$450 each month!** The chart below shows what someone who smokes a pack a day spends over 10 years.



After...	1 day	1 month	6 months	1 year	10 years
Amount spent...	\$15	\$450	\$2,700	\$5,400	<b>\$54,000</b>

**ACTIVITY:** Calculate how much you spend on smoking or vaping. What could you do with that money instead?

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## Explore your motivations

A relationship with nicotine can be tough to end, and many people go back and forth with the decision to quit. If you are **thinking about quitting but are not quite ready**, this section will help you explore your motivations to quit and the obstacles standing in your way.

**REFLECT:** What do you like about smoking/vaping? What do you not like?

Smoking/vaping LIKES	Smoking/vaping DISLIKES

## Common concerns

It is normal to have concerns or hesitations about quitting or reducing. Taking time to think through them and finding resources to learn more can be helpful.

### Common concerns about quitting include:

- ***“I need to smoke or vape to help me de-stress”***

Smoking or vaping only helps with temporary relaxation. In the long term, nicotine actually increases your stress levels. Nicotine doesn't deal with the source of your stress, and you can find new tools that helps you better manage your mental wellbeing.

- ***“I don't have money for nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)”***

Quit aids including NRT (e.g., nicotine patch, gum, or lozenges) and prescription medications are available for free or at a lower cost for British Columbians. Each calendar year, you can get a free 3-month supply through the BC Smoking Cessation Program.\*

Even if you do pay for quit aids, you will save much more money by quitting than if you continue to smoke or vape. Speak to your health care provider (doctor, nurse, or pharmacist) to access quit aids.

*\*Note: Please note that the BC Smoking Cessation Program only offers coverage of NRT and/or prescription medications for those looking to quit tobacco products. These products are not currently covered for those looking to quit vaping only.*

- ***“I only smoke or vape socially, I don’t need to quit”***  
Even smoking or vaping socially harms your health. You are also at risk of starting to smoke or vape regularly (e.g., daily). Quitting will help you improve your health, now and in the future.
- ***“I’m too addicted to quit”***  
It’s true that nicotine is highly addictive, but there are tools available to help you quit. NRT, quit medications, quit coaching, and a strong support system can help you break the addiction.
- ***“My friends or family smoke/vape, I won’t be able to hang out with them”***  
Being around others who smoke or vape can be tough when you are trying to quit. Remember, the people who matter will respect your choices and ultimately want what is best for you and your health. You may even inspire them to try quitting as well!



**ACTIVITY:** Fill in the blank

*I want to quit smoking or vaping, but*

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## Reasons to quit

**There are many great reasons to quit or reduce smoking and vaping. What stands out to you the most?**

- Improved health
- Financial savings
- Being a role model for friends and family
- Increased confidence and self-esteem
- Freedom from addiction
- More energy
- More time

**REFLECT:** What does your smoke or vape free life look like?

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If you decide to quit, what do you hope will be different for you? And what are you most looking forward to?

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**Our Quit Coaches can help you navigate your questions and concerns about quitting.**

Visit [www. quitnow.ca/find-support/get-free-coaching](http://www.quitnow.ca/find-support/get-free-coaching) to talk to a Quit Coach!



# Benefits of Quitting

**Quitting smoking improves your health and can add years to your life.** When you quit smoking, your body starts to heal sooner than you might expect. Here are some of the ways that your body starts to repair itself after you quit smoking:



## Within 20 Minutes:

- Heart rate and blood pressure drop



## Within 5 Years:

- Your chance of having a stroke is about the same as someone who has never smoked
- You lower your risk of developing mouth, throat, esophagus, and bladder cancer by about half



## Within 12 Hours:

- Carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal



## Within 24 Hours:

- Your risk of having a heart attack starts to lower



## Within 10 Years:

- You lower your risk of developing lung cancer by about half



## Within 1 - 9 months:

- Your circulation improves
- Your lung function increases, coughing and shortness of breath reduces



## Within 15 Years:

- Your risk of coronary heart disease is about the same as someone who has never smoked



## Within 1 year:

- Your added risk of having coronary heart disease is half than someone who smokes

*We are still learning about how vaping affects your health in the long term. From what we know right now, quitting vaping can help you breathe better, reduce coughing, strengthen your immune system. It may also reduce your risk of developing lung diseases and of having a heart attack or stroke.*

## ACTIVITY: Pros and Cons of Smoking and Vaping

Fill out this table to reflect on the pros and cons of quitting or reducing smoking or vaping. Come back to this table periodically to see how you feel about making a quit attempt.

Pros of smoking or vaping	Cons of smoking or vaping
Helps me feel relaxed (example only)	I have to go outside in the cold to smoke (example only)
Pros of quitting or reducing	Cons of quitting or reducing
I will save lots of money (example only)	I will have to avoid my friends who smoke (example only)

## What are your next steps?

**You've made it to the end of this booklet!** We hope this booklet has helped you explore your curiosity about quitting or reducing smoking or vaping. If you're wondering where to go from here, try some of the following:

### Make use of QuitNow's resources:



Make a profile on [quitnow.ca](https://quitnow.ca) and set up a **Quit Plan**. You don't need to set a quit date right away. You can explore the different sections of our website, learn more about quitting, and read posts from others who are quitting on the **Community Forum**.



Sign up for our **Text Tips** or **Email Tips** programs. You will receive tips and motivational messages to help you feel ready to take the next step and set quit date. Visit [quitnow.ca/find-support/tips-program-subscribe](https://quitnow.ca/find-support/tips-program-subscribe) to sign up.



Set up a call with a **Quit Coach**. Our Coaches can address questions or concerns you may have about quitting or reducing. Call toll-free at **1-877-455-2233** to schedule a call. You can also chat live with a Quit Coach at [quitnow.ca/chat](https://quitnow.ca/chat) if you have a question or need immediate assistance.

## Try challenging yourself with small goals to build up your confidence to quit or reduce:

- Next time you have the urge to smoke or vape, **try to resist for 5 minutes** or skip it entirely. See how you feel!
- Track your smoking or vaping behaviour for a week (where, when, how much) to notice patterns in your behaviour.
- Try to **cut out one cigarette or vape session each day** by changing something about your routine. - *E.g., If you vape while driving to work, try taking a different route or carpooling instead.*
- **Set a SMART goal** with something you can do to increase your readiness to quit. - *E.g., "I will not smoke while having my morning coffee by switching to tea instead starting July 1."*
- **Limit where you smoke or vape.** - *E.g., "I won't smoke in my car, or I won't smoke at work. Or, smoke only in one room of your house/apartment."*

If you are feeling ready to take the next step and try to quit or reduce, great! Visit [quitnow.ca/join](https://quitnow.ca/join) to make a **Quit Plan** and set a date to quit or reduce.

**If you're still feeling unsure about quitting or are not interested in quitting right now, that is okay. Come back to this booklet the next time you're feeling curious about a tobacco or vape free life. We're here for you!**



**Support is here when you're ready.**

**For help with quitting, call or visit:**

**1-877-455-2233**  
**www.quitnow.ca**





**A smoke and vape free  
life is possible.**

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