Health@Hopkins

Smoking Cessation

Smoking: to emit or exhale smoke; to smoke tobacco habitually
Cessation: a temporary or final ceasing (as of action): to stop

The history of tobacco and cigarette smoking pre-dates Columbus. During his lifetime though, a fellow explorer, Rodrigo de Jerez, landed in Cuba and observed inhabitants smoking tobacco leaves. He started smoking, returned to Spain, and scared his fellow countrymen. They thought he was possessed by the devil because of the smoke coming out of his mouth and nose. The Spanish Inquisition imprisoned him for several years based on that fear. Ironically, during de Jerez’s imprisonment, smoking gained acceptance and became popular all over Spain.

Cigarette smoking in the United States is still a popular habit, even in 2010. In spite of almost five decades of warnings from the US Surgeon General that smoking causes lung cancer, people still smoke. Even after the US Surgeon concluded in 1988 that nicotine is an addictive drug, people still smoke.

According to the American Heart Association, an estimated 24.8 million men (23.1 percent) and 21.1 million women (18.3 percent) are smokers. If smoking was an easy habit to quit, fewer people would smoke. But it’s not easy; it’s challenging. As with any challenge, the more you plan, the greater your chance of success. The more you understand and prepare, the better you’ll be able to maintain control and stay smoke-free.

Quit Aids

If you aren’t motivated and committed to kicking the habit, no quit aid can help you. If you are ready to quit, any of them have the potential to work well.

A lot of people quit successfully by going cold turkey. If this sounds too extreme for you, plenty of options are available to help you withdraw from nicotine comfortably such as the nicotine patch, gum, lozenges, nasal spray or inhaler. Along with smoking aids, research shows that a guided support program will further assist you with being successful. Also, many of these aids may be covered by your insurance. And keep in mind that it’s always a good idea to check with your doctor about quit smoking options and discuss what might work best for you.

Your Resources

Johns Hopkins (JH) offers a number of Smoking Cessation programs for its employees. Johns Hopkins Health System Corporation (JHHSC) and Johns Hopkins Hospital (JHH) Wellnet, as well as John Hopkins Bayview Wellnet offer a network of wellness services for benefit eligible employees. Some of those services include Smoking Cessation Quit Kits, educational seminars, hypnosis, guided support groups, health coaching, 800 Quit Now and awareness events.

The EHP Health Coach Program is another service available to all JH employees. The health coach helps individuals develop a health action plan. They work directly with you toward your personal goal to quit smoking.

Helpful Resources

There are a few resources available to help you quit smoking.

JHSC/JHH Wellnet
410-955-1040
Wellnet@jhmi.edu

Bayview Wellnet
410-550-1690
BayviewWellnet@jhmi.edu

HEALTH COACHES

Health Coaches Wendy, Nancy, Alijah, Deborah, and Jennifer

Want to quit smoking? Health Coaches are waiting to work with you to create an individualized action plan. Receive the support you need. It’s free. Call 410-762-5390 or 800-957-9670 or email healthcoach@jhhc.com today and begin making changes tomorrow.
“In 1995 my brother, my only sibling, was dying at the age of 46 due to his risky behavior and lifestyle. Then it dawned on me that I had also made some bad choices. I was smoking like there was no tomorrow. I was still flicking my BIC,” said Brenda Gray, senior benefits representative, Johns Hopkins University.

“It became very clear to me that one day I could be on my death bed because I chose to light up a fog. It terrified me. I stopped immediately, cold turkey,” continued Brenda.

But Brenda’s story didn’t end there.

“Three months later my brother was gone and I was back smoking. I had convinced myself that they (cigarettes) were helping me through the grief process, and as soon as I felt better, I would stop. I didn’t.”

“The following year I transferred to another department. Wellnet was sponsoring a free Smoking Cessation program, and two co-workers and myself were signed up, involuntarily. This was the beginning for me to take back control of my life smoke-free,” said Brenda. “That was 14 years ago, and I’m proud to say that I remain smoke-free today.”

Michelle Sullivan, an environmental services worker at Johns Hopkins Hospital, is like thousands of people around the country who want to quit smoking, but haven’t done so successfully.

“I need to stop smoking first because it’s not healthy. I believe it (smoking) has a lot to do with my elevated pressure and migraines.

“I have five grandkids, and the two that live with me have breathing problems. I don’t smoke around the kids, but I smoke in my room with the door shut.”

Michelle has tried many ways to quit smoking, but somehow always went back. However, Michelle is taking advantage of services offered through her employer. She went to the Employee Health and Wellness Center and they referred her to Wellnet. Wellnet is providing Michelle with support materials and educational resources, and also suggested that she work with an EHP Health Coach.

As for Michelle and her struggle with smoking?

“I have not given up. I will use the resources that Johns Hopkins Hospital has for its employees.”

Administrative Coordinator, Lisa Burwell has worked in the Department of Neurology at Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center for the last eight years, as a smoker. Lisa knew she did not want to be a lifetime smoker and was tired of waking up every morning with a headache. Although several attempts failed, Lisa tried one more time.

Last October, Lisa attended a smoking hypnosis session sponsored by Bayview Wellnet. She enrolled in an online support program which sent daily reminders and tips while going through the process. Every time she got an urge to smoke a cigarette, she would read her tip and remind herself of the ultimate goal. With an added hypnosis session and Chantix, Lisa is smoke-free.

“I wake up every day feeling good. I changed my diet, switched my exercise routine, and stay committed. I have better interactions with my colleagues, friends, and family. It has had a positive snowball effect all the way around!”

Her advice to others? “At each milestone, no matter how small it may seem, reward yourself. Take the money you would have spent on a pack of cigarettes and buy or doing something nice for yourself.”

Seeing her mother die from lung cancer was a difficult and painful process, but it wasn’t the life-changing event that would inspire Lynn Shepke to quit smoking. Two years went by before Lynn, an executive assistant at Johns Hopkins HealthCare, decided that she “wanted” to quit for herself.

She took positive steps toward making that happen. She joined an eight-week Smoking Cessation program at work. She finally threw her smokes away the week before her last class.

“Quit when YOU are ready. You can only do this for yourself and not for anyone else. Determine a day to start. Stop smoking in the house and put your cigarettes in an inconvenient place.

“I used lozenges to help with the cravings. When I have a craving now, I immediately think of something else like my grocery list, or what I plan to do this weekend; anything to change my mind set. I think about how long it’s been since I quit, and I ask myself if I REALLY want to go back to coughing and hacking.

“I had smoked since I was 11-years-old and smoked up to two packs a day when I finally quit at age 40. It’s been three years, and I have no concern about going back. I’ve gained some weight, but I can breathe, and I don’t cough until I’m blue in the face.”

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