

Are cigarettes burning a hole in your pocket?

Tips to quit

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(Medical Xpress) -- The recent Illinois cigarette tax hike is making smoking dangerous to people's physical and financial health. The additional economic pressures are compelling people to quit smoking. In fact, 70 percent of people who smoke want to quit and 50 percent have tried in the last year, but the pull of nicotine keeps them tethered to the habit.

"Nicotine really is that addictive. It's a hard battle, but every one that we win, including increasing the cost of cigarettes through taxes, brings individual smokers to the tipping point where the pain of smoking overcomes the joys of nicotine and they quit," said Philip McAndrew, MD, a Loyola University Health system internal medicine physician and an occupational health expert. "The tipping point could be a life-altering health experience, but often it's the impact on the pocketbook that makes people really consider quitting."

In Chicago it can easily cost a person \$300 a month to smoke. This is more than twice as expensive as a monthly prescription of medications to help people stop smoking.

"Even if a person's insurance won't cover medications, it costs \$65 a month for Zyban. The cost of nicotine patches is only \$100 a month," McAndrew said.

That financial impact can be enough to encourage some to quit. But even when a person has reached that tipping point, it's only the beginning.

“To quit you need the time and a teamwork approach. Don’t expect to do it overnight and you need a team of support around you to cheer you on. That team captain should be your physician,” McAndrew said. “Nicotine is too strong an opponent for someone to go it alone. You need that team to help keep you on track when everything inside of you wants to go back.”

McAndrew gave some tips to help quit:

1. Build a team

“You can’t do this alone. Nicotine releases serotonin and we love that feeling, so you will need people around you to support you. You will need people who are with you in all areas of your life, especially in places that make you think of smoking,” McAndrew said. The team should include:

- Your physician
- Friends who are supportive of you quitting
- Co-workers
- Family

2. Set a specific date

It is important to be specific on a date you want to quit but also give yourself time to prepare. It is recommended to set a date two to four weeks away so you have time to prepare your environment and your mind to quit.

3. Prepare for Quit DayThe moment you decide to quit start thinking about what changes you need to make and take an inventory of what you need to do to limit the temptation of nicotine.

- Consider keeping a diary of when you smoke and where so you know where and when you might struggle the most.
- Talk to your physician about medications and other tactics to aid you in the fight. Buy gum, carrot sticks or other snacks for the car and office to help with the oral fixation.
- Get rid of all cigarettes, matches, lighters and ashtrays from your home, car, office, wherever you smoke.
- Clean your clothes, home and car so they don't smell like smoke. Program into your phone with resources like the Illinois Tobacco Quitline, (866) 784-8937, to find support when you've hit a wall.

4. Celebrate Quit Day“Once the decision is made to quit smoking, start thinking about the Quit Day and get excited. Don't see it as an end to a favorite habit, but a celebration of the beginning of a new, healthier life,” McAndrew said. He suggested going out with friends or having a party to mark this special occasion. Just make sure there is no smoking allowed.

5. New mechanisms for coping with stressStress is often a trigger for someone to return to old habits. This is where your doctor, a support group and your team can really lend a hand. Find healthier ways to deal with stress such as exercising or deep breathing. Make sure you have those plans in place before your [Quit](#) Day.

6. Watch out for boredom, especially in the carAnother pothole on the path to quitting is boredom. One of the hardest places to avoid smoking is in the car. McAndrew suggested having gum and carrot sticks or pretzels in the car at all times to help with the desire to have something in your mouth. He also suggested listening to audio books while driving to keep your mind active.

7. Continue to do the things you enjoy

Stopping smoking is not only a physical battle, it's psychological as well. "People connect smoking with nice things, like taking break or going out with friends. It's important to break that psychological connection," said McAndrew. He recommends:

- Go ahead and take that smoking break, just don't smoke. Consider going on a walk or spending some time outside.
- Keep going out with your friends. Since most restaurants and bars don't allow smoking, you won't be as tempted.
- Why not have that dessert? Just don't have a cigarette at the end of it.

8. Think about those you love

"Quitting smoking is about so much more than ourselves. Studies have shown that secondhand smoke can be more devastating than firsthand smoke, especially for children. Children who live in homes where there is a smoker are more prone to allergies and have more colds, upper respiratory infections and ear infections," McAndrew said. "Also, research has shown that parents' smoking habits greatly increase the risk of their children smoking. Of all the things you pass on to your kids, your [smoking](#) habit shouldn't be one of them."

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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