

# Strategies to quit smoking

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Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S., and a listed risk factor for numerous diseases.

"I think the reasons for quitting are primarily to avoid the [adverse health effects](#), live longer and live better," says Dr. J. Taylor Hays, director of

the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Center.

The addictive nature of smoking can be traced to nicotine, a chemical that alternates between stimulant and depressant. Dr. Hays says reducing cravings requires a combined approach of behavioral and medication therapy.

"It's generally the same for all [addictions](#), that we want to change the way people think and the way they behave surrounding the use of the substance," says Dr. Hays.

Avoiding triggers, trying exercise and [relaxation techniques](#), and leaning on a support system are just a few tips to consider when quitting. The results can reduce stress and improve overall health.

"Even though people use smoking as a stress reliever, it probably creates more stress," says Dr. Hays. "We know that people who quit have a significant reduction in [psychological distress](#)."

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