

## Time to quit



If you have experienced difficulty trying to quit smoking or if you have stopped in the past and taken it up again, did you blame yourself (I'm too weak...I'm not motivated enough), your body (there's something wrong with me...I just can't give up) or your circumstances (this just isn't the right time for me)?

Smoking is an addiction that is made up of three parts: chemical addiction, habits and emotional ties. While we can manage to remove the chemicals out of our system over a few days, the main challenges of quitting are the habits and the emotional ties associated with smoking. The way you think about smoking affects your behaviour and how you feel emotionally makes it difficult to follow a quit program and to stop for good.

While there are many good reasons to stop smoking, there are also reasons to not quit too. Consider for a moment, what are some of the reasons you might not want to quit? We all know that smoking is bad for our health but why do we still continue? Take some time to write down the main things that are stopping you.

You can see the dilemma you are in. You know smoking is not good for you but on the other hand it does feel good...at least for a little while. So what does it take in order to quit? A good place to start is your motivation. How motivated are you? [Livewell](#) has ten great reasons to stop smoking. You may wish to visit the website for inspiration.

The next step is to look at our patterns of smoking and our triggers. The more we are aware of our triggers the more we can manage our smoking behaviour.

The key topics this month are:

- Time to quit.
- PPC Worldwide/IPS has changed its name to Optum.
- Five steps to staying healthy in autumn.
- World No Tobacco Day.

### **PPC Worldwide/IPS has changed its name to Optum**

Effective April 1, 2014, we have consolidated the operations of PPC Worldwide Pty Ltd and IPS under a new company name of Optum Health & Technology (Australia) Pty Ltd. You will see marketing materials transition to the new logo over the next few months.

**Our commitment to service delivery has not changed and will continue to remain a top priority.** For further information, please contact your HR department.



## Triggers and high risk situations

First, tick the box next to each trigger which makes you want to light up a cigarette. Use the space provided to write what you can do to manage your triggers.

Feelings	What I can do to manage my triggers?
<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious feelings	
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling sad	
<input type="checkbox"/> After drinking alcohol	
<input type="checkbox"/> Worry	
<input type="checkbox"/> Stress	
<input type="checkbox"/> When I'm feeling depressed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Having extra money in my pocket	
<input type="checkbox"/> Being fearful about something	
<input type="checkbox"/> Boredom	
<input type="checkbox"/> When I'm mad or angry	
<input type="checkbox"/> Too much time alone	
<input type="checkbox"/> Overworked	
<input type="checkbox"/> Feelings of frustration	
<input type="checkbox"/> When I'm hungry	
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling disappointed	
<input type="checkbox"/> Anniversary dates of losses or trauma	
<input type="checkbox"/> When I'm really tired	
<input type="checkbox"/> Feeling overwhelmed with responsibilities	

When it comes to triggers, awareness is your first line of defence. Once you become aware, talk to a trusted friend, go for a walk or simply wait it out. Create a list of things you can do to help you manage your triggers. [Livewell](#) has a five step programme that can assist you in your journey to quit smoking and ideas on how to manage your triggers. For example, breaking the association between the habit and the emotional ties associated with smoking is tricking your brain out of doing things that it associates with having a cigarette. Think about what you do in the morning. Maybe you have your first cigarette of the day with a cup of coffee? Breaking the association might involve switching a morning coffee for a morning tea. Your brain does not associate having a tea with a cigarette so this may help alleviate the craving.



## Five steps to staying healthy in Autumn

Boost your immunity and avoid colds and flu this season.

### 1 Your diet

Eating foods that are high in vitamin C will help keep your immune system strong, so include fruit and vegies such as lemons, kiwifruit, capsicum and broccoli in your weekly shopping.

If you're struggling to get the recommended two serves of fruit and five serves of vegies each day, try juicing them. A blend of carrot, beetroot, spinach and lemon is a stress-busting combination that will boost your immune system. Ensure your diet also includes plenty of lean meats, fish, poultry, low-fat dairy, legumes, wholegrains, nuts, seeds and use lots of herbs and spices.

### 2 Exercise regularly

It's vital to keep your workout regimen up during autumn, with a recent study showing that a moderate level of regular exercise has a long-term cumulative effect on immune response. Don't go overboard as overly strenuous exercise releases the stress hormone cortisol in the body, which can weaken the immune system.

### 3 Stay connected

Socialising helps strengthen your immune system by keeping you active and reducing your stress levels, so avoid the temptation to rug up on the couch all autumn. Invite friends over for dinner or host a games night, visit local museums and art galleries, wrap up warm and go for a walk in the park with your family or plan a cinema date with your partner.

### 4 Scrub up

Frequent hand washing is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick and spreading illness as it limits the transfer of bacteria, viruses and other microbes, according to the Mayo Clinic in the US. This is important during autumn when we tend to cough and sneeze more frequently. Wet your hands and lather up with soap for 20 seconds to help dislodge germs and rinse well under running water.

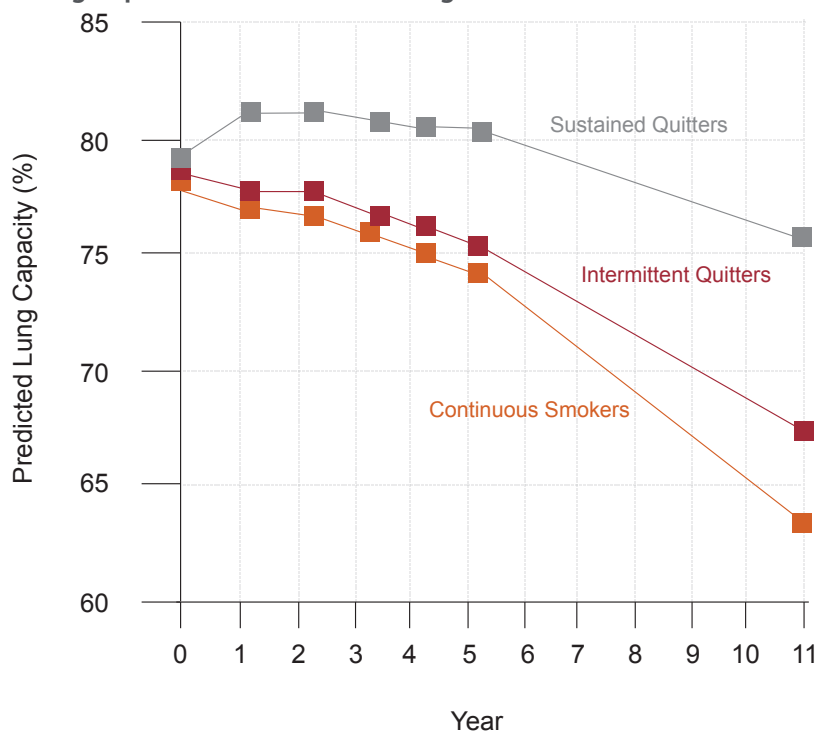
## Why you should quit

The more you smoke the greater the likelihood of risk. Tobacco continues to be one of the single greatest causes of preventable death globally. While not every heavy smoker will die of a smoker's disease, the risk of it is greater than if you are a social smoker or non-smoker.

Doctors use 'pack-years' as one method of determining level of risk – smoking one pack a day every day for a year counts as one pack-year. So a pack-a-day smoker who has smoked for seven years has seven pack-years accumulated. Whereas someone who only smokes one pack per week for 14 years has only two pack-years accumulated, and as such is at a lower level of risk.

Cutting down on pack-years will lessen the risk, as well as making it easier to quit completely in the future. While there is no truly 'safe' level of smoking, even incremental steps in reducing smoking can have positive impact on your health.

### Smoking exposure and decline in lung function



## Call to action

- Identify your reasons to quit. Include both short and long-term benefits.
- Identify your high risk situations and how you will deal with them.
- Prepare yourself before you start your journey. For example, dispose of ash trays, lighters and other paraphernalia that reminds you of smoking.
- Break the association between smoking and pleasurable events.
- Implement strategies to quit. For example, use distractions when you have cravings.
- Set a quit date, and get rid of all of your cigarettes by that date.
- Manage your emotions if/when you have a setback. Avoid negative self-talk.
- Get more exercise. It relieves the urge to smoke.
- Make a plan about what you will do instead of smoking when stressed or other times you have the urge for tobacco. Be as specific as possible.
- Avoid smoke-filled settings and situations in which you are more likely to smoke.
- Access Optum EAP counselling for support.

## 5 Sleep well

Lack of sleep can have a serious effect on your immune system, making you more vulnerable to catching colds. This can also result in a substantial decrease in the white blood cells that help to fight infection in the body.

Create a relaxing bedtime routine, such as listening to soft music or soaking in a warm bath. Avoid watching TV or using your computer just before bedtime and turn the lights down low an hour before you turn in for the night, as it will boost the release of melatonin in the brain. Also try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends.





## Resources to quit smoking

You may find a variety of interactive tools on [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au). Click on the following links to:

- Estimate how much you are spending on cigarettes:  
<http://www.quit.org.au/reasons-to-quit/cost-of-smoking>
- See the health risks of smoking:  
<http://www.quit.org.au/reasons-to-quit/health-risks-of-smoking>
- See the health benefits of quitting:  
<http://www.quit.org.au/reasons-to-quit/health-benefits-of-quitting>



## World No Tobacco Day

Every year, on the 31st of May, the World Health Organisation (WHO) and partners worldwide mark World No Tobacco Day, highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death globally and is currently responsible for 10% of adult deaths worldwide.

The ultimate goal of World No Tobacco Day is to contribute to protecting present and future generations not only from the devastating health consequences due to tobacco, but also from the social, environmental and economic scourges of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke.

Specific goals of the 2014 campaign are:

- Governments increase taxes on tobacco to levels that reduce tobacco consumption.
- Individuals and civil society organisations encourage their governments to increase taxes on tobacco to levels that reduce consumption.

## Support

Optum can support you in times of need and explore possible strategies that will assist you to re-balance your life as soon as possible. Call us today.

**Australia 1300 361 008**

**New Zealand 0800 155 318**

Sources: [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au) | [www.cancer.org.au](http://www.cancer.org.au)

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