

LGBT Tobacco Cessation Fact Sheet

Do you know that LGBT people are more likely to smoke than most any other population group in the United States? Being around other smokers can make it more difficult for people in our communities to quit. But many of us are trying, and better information on how to quit and stay quit can help. The following points are taken from a variety of materials, with specific focus on this might be different for us.

The 123 of Stopping Smoking

1. **Quitting smoking is HARD but millions have QUIT!**
 - Tobacco is one of the most highly addictive substances around us. In the words of one LGBT health researcher, "This is much harder to kick than heroin."
 - Don't underestimate the challenge! It's better to slow down and prepare a quit attempt than race ahead.
2. **Cold turkey is rarely a good choice.**
 - Yes, it works for some... but only about one in ten who try. You can double or triple your chances of staying quit by combining strategies. Read on to learn about the best recipe for success.
3. **Slow down and learn about how to do it more successfully. Practice leads to success!**

Some key things to know

Social support really affects us...

- With more people smoking in the LGBT communities, we're more likely to have smokers around us – and this can make it harder to stop.
- Our friends are especially important, and the social support they provide offsets stress we experience as a result of being LGBT.
- Support from your friends or family can help a lot when you try to quit. But guilt doesn't! See the box at the end for tips on how they can give you guilt-free support.

Quitting smoking is a process...

- In any given year, 70% of all smokers try to quit. But it rarely happens their first time; most people try 7-8 times before they succeed at quitting.
- Be gentle on yourself as you start this process. It's been proven that every single quit attempt moves you closer to a final success! The longer it lasts, the more it helps.

This habit really runs deep...

- A piece of quitting smoking is about fighting the addiction, another piece is about changing a deeply engrained habit. This can affect many different (sometimes unexpected) parts of your life.
- Think about this: the only thing an average smoker does more than smoke... is blink!

YOU CAN DO IT!

Now, here's the recipe for success!

- You are most likely to quit smoking if you combine three strategies (like combination therapy for tobacco!)
 - First, talk to your doctor about your smoking and see if you are able to take a prescription medication that can help, like Zyban (also called Wellbutrin), nicotine inhaler and nicotine nasal spray.
 - Second, plan to take a type of nicotine replacement therapy, like the patch, gum or lozenge. And new evidence shows we shouldn't dial down the doses of this stuff as fast as previously thought, stay higher if needed. Also know that you can combine these therapies, but check with your health care provider first.
 - Third, enroll in some type of stop smoking support program, like a group, individual counseling, or website. Call your state smoking Quitline for local resources, or a local LGBT community center. These programs teach you daily steps, build valuable skills (like learning your smoking triggers) and provide immediate social support.
- Continue to be gentle with yourself. If you begin smoking again, think about how each quit attempt brings you closer to final success. So, don't get discouraged, just regroup and start again.

Still need more? Think about how we've been targeted.

LGBT people have been successfully targeted by tobacco companies...

- Tobacco companies offer an unknown amount of financial support to LGBT festivals, bars, media, and local organizations.¹ As early supporters of LGBT causes, the Tobacco companies garnered appreciative community response, since many other funders avoided LGBT issues.^{2, 3}
- They may target us, but they don't respect us. An early Tobacco industry document described a plan for increasing sales among San Francisco's gay and homeless populations. It was titled "Project SCUM".⁴
- Tobacco industry funding can compromise anti-tobacco activities by LGBT community organizations. For example, while major TV networks refused to air an ad exposing "Project SCUM", it was hard for GLAAD to fight back, because they were taking tobacco industry money in support of their annual gala.⁵

And look at how it's paid off for them...

- LGBT are 40-70% more likely to smoke than non-LGBT.^{1, 6} This is one of the highest smoking rates, even out of all the disproportionately affected sub-populations.⁷
- LGBT adolescents are taking up smoking at an alarming rate. In a recent national study 45% of females and 35% of males who reported same-sex attraction or behavior smoked. In comparison, only 29% of the rest of the youth smoked.⁸

YOU CAN DO IT!

I want to help a friend quit smoking, what do I do?

1. **Avoid the traps.** Your friend probably knows just how bad smoking is for their health, most likely they've wanted to quit for a while, possibly even tried before. Telling them it's bad for their health or they should quit doesn't motivate them, it just shows you don't understand.
2. **Understand that this is big.** If your friend tries to quit, they are doing something really big: changing a deeply ingrained habit that probably goes back to their childhood, that likely affects most aspects of their life, and that also has a nasty addiction attached to it.
3. **Think about support, not guilt!** Most smokers try 7-8 times before they succeed at quitting. And each quit attempt moves them closer to the final success, especially if it lasts longer, or if it helps them reduce their number of cigarettes smoked daily. So, think about supporting their success and forgetting the guilt if your friend starts smoking again.

Practical steps to help

If your friend isn't talking about quitting yet...

- Talk to them about how you want to be on their support team if they do want to try quitting. But don't turn your words into nagging!

If your friend is thinking about quitting soon...

- Help them prepare for their quit attempt. You can look up the smoking Quitline for them, or find a local cessation group. You can talk with them about what you can do to help with stress or to help support their new habits as they start their quit attempt.

If your friend is trying to quit now...

- Offer to do smoke-free things with them, like a movie, or a dinner at a smoke-free restaurant.
- Check-in to see how you can help.
- Offer to do stress-reducing things with them; think of things that might include exercise or that you often do to relax.
- Keep showing them how proud you are of their effort.

If they have started smoking again after a quit attempt...

- Reaffirm their success and tell them you want to be on their support team next time too.

If they have stayed quit for a while...

- Remember it's not over, people often battle urges to smoke for years after they quit.

But what if I smoke too?

You can still be part of their support team, taking the steps outlined above. Chances are the things you learn might help you someday too. Or if you are ready, you can try a quit attempt together. But do be careful about smoking around someone who is trying to quit, because that creates a big temptation.

For more information on any of the facts quoted in this factsheet, please contact Donald Hitchcock at the National Coalition for LGBT Health at **coalition@lgbthealth.net**. This factsheet was prepared by Scout on 5/24/05.

Citations

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