

Stop smoking this New Year

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Colette Rogers, Strategic Lead for Tobacco Control with the PHA, said: "In Northern Ireland around 320,000 people aged 16 and over smoke, and, sadly, one in every two smokers dies early because of their smoking habit.

“New Year is a time when many people decide to quit smoking and while some might be able to do it with very little support; others find that planning ahead and making use of the support services that are available can really help them make the decision permanent.

“There are over 650 free PHA-funded stop smoking services across Northern Ireland that provide support and stop smoking medication in pharmacies, GP surgeries, hospitals, community centres and workplaces that can help your quit attempt. By using one of these services, people are four times more likely to quit.”

The PHA offers some helpful tips to keep you on track:

- Set a specific date on which you want to stop smoking and stick to it. Let people know so they can support you in your quit attempt. Try to encourage a group of your friends or family to stop with you and support one another.
- To get started, it is really useful to have a careful look at what you do at the moment. Review your smoking habit and change your routine to avoid situations when you usually smoke, for example, if you smoke having a cup of coffee, try tea instead. If you smoke first thing in the morning, take a shower instead or if you smoke when you are on the phone hold a pencil and doodle. If you smoke on your way to work, take a slightly different route to help change your routine.
- In the first few days after quitting, drink lots of water and fluids to help flush out the nicotine and other poisons from your body. Try to avoid alcohol and coffee, as these tend to increase the desire for a cigarette.
- Don't fall into the trap of having 'just one' cigarette. Be on your guard against temptation – one cigarette can easily lead to another.
- Instead of smoking, use the 'tangle' found in the PHA's free stop smoking resources as an alternative for something to do with your hands - [Stop Smoking \(stopsmokingni.info\)](http://stopsmokingni.info) website. Alternatively, occupy your hands with a stress or tennis ball.
- When you feel like smoking a cigarette, try texting or ringing a friend – it will help the craving to pass and take your mind off it.
- Avoid eating high-energy, high-sugar snack foods in place of cigarettes; try fresh fruit, a low-fat yogurt or sugar-free gum instead.
- Avoid skipping meals or eating sweets as both cause a rapid rise and fall in blood sugar levels which make cravings worse.
- Keep active. Walk more; go for a swim or a cycle; dance to music at home; do some vacuuming; gardening; or, wash the car. Any physical activity produces chemicals in the body which make people feel better. Physical activity has been shown to help quit attempts and will help to reduce weight gain.
- Put the money you are saving on cigarettes away so that you can buy something you really want. It can help motivate you when things are tough. Quitting a 20-a-day habit will deliver an average £3,420 a year saving.

Colette concluded: “If you quit and then relapse, accept it, work out why it happened, and focus on how you can avoid it in future. It takes several efforts for many people to quit for good but if you are determined you will do it. Last year thousands of people decided to stop using our 'Stop Smoking Services' and many others quit on their own. 'Be prepared' is the motto for success.”

For more information and useful tips to stop smoking, visit the PHA's [Stop Smoking \(stopsmokingni.info\)](https://stopsmokingni.info) website.

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