



KAISER PERMANENTE®

Why People Smoke

There are many reasons that people smoke. Consider if any of the following seven apply to you:

- 1.) Maybe you smoke because you enjoy handling a cigarette. You enjoy the little ritual of lighting up. You like to gesture with a cigarette in hand when you talk, taking a drag when you pause.
- 2.) Maybe you smoke for stimulation. You look forward to the slight "lift" smoking gives you. You find that smoking keeps you going when you work on something for a long period or perks you up when you're bored.
- 3.) Maybe you smoke to relax. You like the taste of a cigarette. You like to sit down at the end of a period of work and enjoy a smoke—perhaps with a cup of coffee or a drink.
- 4.) Maybe you smoke to reduce tension. You light up when you're angry or upset, or waiting for an important phone call. You tend to smoke more when you're worried about money, personal problems, or work.
- 5.) Maybe you smoke out of habit. Sometimes you light a cigarette when you already have one burning. You light up automatically whenever you read or answer the phone or drink coffee or do paperwork.
- 6.) Maybe you smoke because you're psychologically addicted. You go to extremes if you run out—going out late at night, interrupting an important activity, bumming from people you don't even know. When you want a cigarette, you can't concentrate on anything else.
- 7.) Maybe you smoke because you're physically addicted. Research is now clear that nicotine is physically addicting. Nine out of ten beginning smokers become confirmed smokers. Not everyone who smokes is physically addicted, but the more you smoke, the greater your risk of developing dependency upon the nicotine drug.

Once you know why you smoke, you can take steps to help you cut down or stop. For example, if you enjoy handling a cigarette, you could handle something else instead. You could do needlework or, like the Greeks, use worry beads.

If you smoke to be stimulated, to relax, or reduce tension, you might try substituting other activities. Go for a walk, swim, or jog, practice a relaxation technique, or call a friend on the phone.

If you smoke out of habit, you might be able to cut down by becoming more aware of smoking. Put your cigarettes where you can't get to them easily. That will make you notice that you are

reaching for a smoke, so you can ask yourself if you really want it. Surprisingly often, the answer is "no."

If you smoke because of psychological or physical addiction, it may be harder to quit. You might want to consider joining a stop smoking program.

We hope that everybody will want to stop smoking. If you succeed, you will feel better and, very likely, will live much longer. Don't give up. Many people have tried to quit smoking many times and then finally succeeded.

To learn about the stop smoking programs offered by Kaiser Permanente or in your community, contact the Health Education Department at your local Kaiser Permanente facility.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at www.kaiserpermanente.org/california, then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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REGIONAL HEALTH EDUCATION