



7 tips to kicking bad habits

Want to kick a bad habit, but don't know where to start? Bad habits and unsuccessful attempts to kick these habits leads to low self-esteem while increasing your risks of chronic diseases and other illnesses. Good habits, in turn, empower you to new levels of success in your professional and personal life, while contributing to your overall physical and mental health.

Try these seven tips to overcome your bad habits.

- 1. Commit.** Acknowledge that you must change. Don't commit just because your spouse, kids, colleagues or even your parents want you to change. Understand that change is not easy, but if you're truly quitting for yourself, your chances of success are more solid.
- 2. Get real.** Set clear, realistic goals and time lines to improve your chances of long-term success. Some people find it useful to write down their specific goals, and chart their progress in a journal or calendar.
- 3. Don't go solo.** You can discuss your goals with others to get their support and possibly their participation to kick bad habits of their own. This will also help others avoid your temptations when you're together. Find encouragement from friends, family members and colleagues. Join support groups. Your health care provider can share proven support groups for your particular bad habits, and possibly even medications to help you quit smoking.
- 4. Swap in the good.** Pick up another habit: a good one. Find something that gets your mind off your bad habit. Try taking a walk, reading a book, doing new type of exercise, cooking or preparing a healthful snack, or using a new application on your mobile device or computer.
- 5. Reward yourself.** Actions followed by rewards are more likely to recur. Even so, we are very poor about rewarding ourselves at stages of kicking bad habits. Many people overlook successes and let a single slip-up turn into a complete relapse. Don't give in. Listen to others' encouragement. Treat yourself to a new pair of shoes, evening out, new music downloads or other tangible rewards.
- 6. Write on.** Every time you engage in your bad habit, write it down. You'll identify patterns, which will help you avoid slipping back to bad habits. For instance, if you tend

toward overeating at a certain time, book an exercise class at that time. Or if you turn to caffeinated drinks when you're under more stress, pre-empt stress-inducing meetings or times with non-caffeinated beverages on hand.

7. Move it. Obviously, a habit of regular exercise sparks weight loss, yet frequent exercise also helps break habits of overeating and addictions, especially if you substitute a workout for an end-of-the-day cigarette or alcoholic drink. In fact, among smokers who become competitive runners, more than 80 percent give up smoking for good.

—Information provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota

Rebecca Fricke
NDPERS Wellness Coordinator
701.328.3978
(800) 803-7377
rfricke@nd.gov

All Members should consult their personal physician before beginning any exercise or weight loss program. Prior to seeking additional services, please refer to your "Certificate of Insurance & Summary Plan Description" for a list of covered services, limitations, and exclusions.