

# HELP FOR GIVING UP SMOKING

## Introduction

In last week's article I discussed the reasons to give up smoking and the benefits to your health (and pocket) of giving up. If you missed this article you can check it out again on [www.whelehans.ie](http://www.whelehans.ie). This week I will concentrate on ways to help you give up.

Weight gain is a concern for many people when giving up. However, the average weight gain is only about 5lbs and you can lose this gradually once you have succeeded in stopping smoking.

## Three steps to giving up

Deciding to give up smoking and really wanting to succeed are important steps in becoming a non-smoker. There are three steps to giving up smoking:

- preparing to stop,
- stopping, and
- staying stopped.

It can take up to three months to become a non-smoker, but it usually takes less time. The physical craving for a cigarette often disappears in less than a week, but the psychological craving can last longer.

### Step 1 - Preparing to stop

It is important that you stop smoking because you want to. Think of the many benefits that you will gain by stopping smoking (see last week's article)

Do not expect giving up smoking to be easy, but remember that the first 3-4 days will be the most difficult. If you can, give up with a friend, or family member, who also wants to quit.

Here are a few tips to help you give up:

- a specific date to give up, and cutting down on the number of cigarettes that you smoke before that date,
- the support of your family and friends to help you give up,
- a reward for the end of your first day, first week, first month, and
- getting rid of everything smoking related, such as cigarettes, ashtrays, and lighters, on the day before you give up.

## Step 2 - Stopping

Your initial goal is to get through the first day without smoking. If you need to put something in your mouth, chew sugar-free gum, or something else that is healthy and non-fattening, such as fruit. If you need to do something with your hands, find something to fiddle with, such as a pencil, a coin, or a stress relief ball.

## Step 3 - Staying stopped

Take it one day at a time. Think positively, remain determined, and reward yourself. At the beginning, it may help to change your normal routine, in order to avoid situations that you would normally associate with smoking. Avoiding alcohol for a while may also help.

Most importantly, do not give up trying to quit, even if you do not succeed the first time. Most people need several attempts at quitting long-term before they stop smoking completely.

## Treatment

To help you give up, there are a number of treatment options available both over the counter in your pharmacy or on prescription from your GP.

### Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) works by releasing nicotine steadily into your bloodstream at much lower levels than in a cigarette, without the tar, carbon monoxide and other poisonous chemicals you get from tobacco smoke. This helps to control the cravings for a cigarette that occur when your body starts to miss the nicotine that smoking provides.

NRT is the most common smoking cessation treatment and comes in many different forms including:

- **Transdermal patches** (which stick to your skin) and which are available in formulations that release nicotine for either 16 hours or 24 hours.
- **Chewing gum** that is available with either 2mg or 4mg of nicotine.
- **Inhalators** which look like a plastic cigarette and through which nicotine is inhaled.
- **Tablets and lozenges** which are placed under your tongue.

These products are all available over the counter at your pharmacy. If you have a medical card, they are available for free once prescribed by your GP.

If you are pregnant or breast-feeding and you want to quit smoking, it is best for your health, and that of your baby's, if you to stop completely and immediately, without the help of any smoking cessation treatment.

## Prescription Medication

There are several different treatments available through your GP. Your GP will advise you which,



if any, is suitable for you.

**Varenicline (Champix®)**

Varenicline, whose brand name is Champix®, is the newest anti smoking drug on the market. It is available in tablet form. It works in two ways, it reduces your enjoyment of a cigarette if you do smoke while taking it and it reduces the craving for a cigarette.

As with all medication, Champix® may not suit everyone and has possible side effects including nausea and drowsiness. These can be explained in more details by your GP or pharmacist. The recommended course of Champix® is generally 12 weeks.

**Bupropion (Zyban®)**

Bupropion is a medication designed to help smoking cessation. The way in which it works is not completely understood, but it is thought to work on the brain pathways involved in addiction and withdrawal. It is available in the form of tablets. Your GP will advise you if it is suitable for you.

**For comprehensive and free health advice and information call in to Whelehans or log on to [www.whelehans.ie](http://www.whelehans.ie)**