



Quitting Smoking



Ideas in Conversation

Read this conversation between a cardiologist and a radio show host on quitting smoking.

Host: Good morning, listeners, and welcome to another episode of Golden Talk. I'm your host, Jamie, and today we're diving into a topic that's been on many of our minds: quitting smoking. We're joined today by Dr. Alex Hartman, a **cardiologist** (=heart specialist) and smoking health expert who has guided countless individuals on their journey of **breaking** the common but harmful **habit** and **becoming smoke-free**. Good morning, Dr. Hartman!

Dr. Hartman: Good morning, Jamie, and hello to everyone **tuning in**. It's a pleasure to be here to discuss something as important as quitting smoking. And I promise I won't cloud the issue with too much **medical jargon**.

Host: (chuckles) That's what we like to hear! So, Dr. Hartman, **let's dive right in**. Dr. Hartman, many of our listeners wonder about what initially attracts people to smoking. Can you tell us how and why people **are drawn to** smoking in the first place and what makes it so **addictive**?

Dr. Hartman: Certainly, Jamie. It often begins with curiosity or social influences, but the **hook**, so to speak, lies in **the science of addiction**. When someone smokes a cigarette, they **inhale nicotine**, which is a powerful chemical. Nicotine

quickly **travels** to the brain, where it stimulates the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter **associated with** pleasure and reward. This dopamine release leads to feelings of **euphoria** and relaxation, which can be very enticing.

Host: So, it's the nicotine that keeps people coming back for more?



Dr. Hartman: Exactly. **Each puff on a cigarette** provides a quick nicotine hit to the brain, reinforcing the act of smoking as a way to quickly feel good. Over time, the brain starts to crave these **dopamine spikes**, leading to addiction. It's not just the nicotine, though; the act of smoking itself can become a ritual that people find **comforting** or enjoyable.

Host: It sounds like a powerful combination of chemical and behavioral addiction, then.

Dr. Hartman: True. The chemical addiction to nicotine creates a **dependency**, while the behavioral aspect – the rituals associated with smoking – **solidifies the habit**. **Breaking free** requires addressing both the **physical craving** for nicotine and the **psychological pull** of the smoking habit.

Host: Will the euphoria continue to exist, or will it **drop** over time?

Dr. Hartman: That's an excellent question, Jamie. The euphoria from nicotine does indeed exist, but its intensity can **diminish over time**. This is because the brain begins to adapt to the regular influx of nicotine, leading to a phenomenon known as **tolerance**. As tolerance develops, the smoker needs to consume more nicotine to achieve the same level of euphoria or satisfaction as before. This cycle can **escalate nicotine consumption** and **deepen the addiction**, making quitting even more challenging.



Host: So, it's like chasing a high that gets harder and harder to reach?

Dr. Hartman: Precisely, Jamie. This chase can lead to increased smoking frequency and quantity, further **exposing** the individual to the harmful effects of tar and other chemicals found in cigarettes. This increased exposure **exacerbates** health risks and complicates the addiction, creating a **vicious cycle** that's **hard to break**.

Host: So we all know smoking's bad for us, but can you break it down for us? Why exactly is it so crucial for smokers to consider quitting?

Dr. Hartman: Well, Jamie, smoking is a **major culprit** behind numerous health issues. It's packed with **harmful substances** like nicotine and **tar**, **not to mention** the dangers of **secondhand smoke**. Quitting smoking can lead to a healthier heart and lungs, more energy, and, frankly, a longer, more vibrant life.



Host: Sounds like a **breath of fresh air** to me. But we hear it's not all **smooth sailing**. What are some challenges people face when they decide to quit?

Dr. Hartman: You're right, Jamie. Quitting smoking is a journey with its **fair share of bumps**. **Withdrawal symptoms** can be tough, ranging from irritability and cravings to difficulty sleeping. Nicotine is addictive, and breaking free from that addiction requires patience and resilience.

Host: Now, for the million-dollar question: What strategies can help people quit?

Dr. Hartman: There are several effective strategies. Nicotine replacement therapy, for example, can ease some of the withdrawal symptoms by providing a **controlled**

dose of nicotine without the tar and other harmful chemicals found in cigarettes. It's also about changing daily routines that are linked to smoking and finding healthier alternatives to cope with stress.

Host: **Change the routine, change the scene**, right? Speaking of scenes, how do cultural perspectives on smoking affect someone's decision to quit?

Dr. Hartman: Culture plays a significant role. In some cultures, smoking is **deeply ingrained** and can be seen as a social activity, making it harder to quit. However, **awareness is growing** globally, and **there's a shift towards** recognizing the importance of quitting for good health. It's about understanding these cultural differences and finding a supportive community, no matter the background.

Host: A community effort, indeed. Now, asking for help can be tough. Any advice on how to take that step?

Dr. Hartman: Absolutely, Jamie. It's important to remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. Whether it's **reaching out to** a healthcare provider, joining a support group, or even talking to friends and family, taking that first step can make all the difference. And for individuals offering help, offering non-judgmental support and encouragement can be just as crucial.

Host: Strength in numbers and in **asking for a helping hand**. Dr. Hartman, any **final words of wisdom** for our listeners thinking about quitting?

Dr. Hartman: Quitting smoking is perhaps one of the best decisions you can make for your health. It won't be easy, and it might take time, but it's absolutely achievable. And remember, every journey begins with a single step. Don't be afraid to take that step, and don't be discouraged by **setbacks**. The goal is progress, not perfection.

Host: Progress, not perfection. I like the sound of that. Dr. Hartman, thank you for sharing your expertise and insights with us today.

Dr. Hartman: Thank you for having me, Jamie. It's been a pleasure. To all the listeners out there, here's to clear skies and clean lungs.

Host: And that wraps up today's episode on Golden Talk. Remember, folks, it's never too late to quit smoking and start living a healthier life. I'm Jamie, signing off. Stay golden!

Useful Language

1. **Kick the habit:** To quit a habitual practice, especially smoking **[informal]**
 - *After ten years of smoking, Lisa finally decided to kick the habit.*
2. **Cold turkey:** To suddenly stop a habit or addiction **[informal]**
 - *He quit smoking cold turkey after his doctor warned him about his rising health risks.*
3. **Smoking cessation:** The process of discontinuing tobacco smoking. **[formal]**
 - *Smoking cessation programs have been proven to increase the success rate of those trying to quit.*
4. **Nicotine cravings:** The strong desire to consume nicotine after one stops smoking.
 - *Dealing with nicotine cravings is one of the toughest parts of quitting smoking.*
5. **Smoke-free zone:** An area where smoking is not allowed.
 - *The new city ordinance expanded smoke-free zones to include all public parks.*
6. **Secondhand smoke:** Breathing in smoke from someone else's cigarette.

- *Exposure to secondhand smoke can also lead to respiratory problems and heart disease.*
8. **Cut down:** To reduce the amount of cigarettes smoked.
- *Before quitting entirely, he decided to cut down to two cigarettes a day.*
9. **Chain smoker:** A person who smokes one cigarette after another with little to no breaks in between.
- *She was a chain smoker, going through more than a pack a day.*
10. **Quit cold turkey:** To stop smoking suddenly and completely.
- *He tried using nicotine patches but eventually decided to quit cold turkey.*
11. **Withdrawal symptoms:** Physical or mental symptoms that occur after stopping a drug to which one is addicted.
- *The withdrawal symptoms were tough, but he was determined to stay smoke-free.*
12. **Smoke like a chimney:** To smoke a lot of cigarettes in a short period of time.
- *My grandfather used to smoke like a chimney, but he quit smoking five years ago.*

Discussion Questions

Read the following discussion questions and think about them.

1. Have you or someone you know ever tried to quit smoking? What was the experience like?
2. Why do people start smoking despite knowing its health risks?
3. What do you think are the most effective ways to quit smoking?
4. In your opinion, what role does society play in encouraging or discouraging smoking?
5. How can friends and family support someone who is trying to quit smoking?
6. What withdrawal symptoms might someone experience when they stop smoking?
7. Do you think smoking should be banned in all public places? Why or why not?
8. How do advertisements and media portray smoking, and how does this influence people?
9. What are some misconceptions about smoking cessation that people might have?
10. Discuss the impact of secondhand smoke on non-smokers. Should smokers be more considerate?