

SMOKING AND BACK PAIN

This fact sheet is for smokers with back pain. It explains why it is important to stop now and describes effective help that is available on the NHS.

Why stop smoking?

Smokers lose an average of 8 years of life unless they stop. They also suffer from diseases of old age for more of their lives.

The earlier you stop, the less the damage but stopping at any age makes a difference.

Smokers suffer more from back pain. The reason is not clear but new evidence shows that stopping smoking can lead to improvements.

It is thought that smoking reduces the blood supply to the discs between the vertebrae and this may lead to degeneration of these discs.

Why get help with stopping?

Stopping smoking can be very difficult. This is because of the way that nicotine acts on the brain: it rewards you when you smoke and produces unpleasant symptoms when you try to stop.

If you try to stop without help, your chances of success are about 1 in 20.

What help is available?

1. Attend an NHS 'Specialist Smokers Clinic'.

You visit the clinic once a week starting one or two weeks before the target quit date and then for four weeks afterwards. Sessions last 60 minutes. They focus on practical ways of avoiding slipping back to smoking. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is usually prescribed (maybe subject to a one off prescription charge).

This treatment boosts your chances of success by 300%.

2. Consult Your Local Participating Pharmacist

Community pharmacists are trained to support smokers wanting to stop. You see the pharmacist once a week, starting one or two weeks before the quit date and carry on for four weeks after it. Sessions typically last 15-20 minutes. NRT is usually prescribed (maybe subject to a one off prescription charge).

This treatment can boost your chances of success by 200%.

3. Discuss with your GP getting NRT or Zyban or buy NRT yourself from a pharmacy.

You will not get the full benefit of the support that the other two options can provide but if you use the medication as directed and continue to use it for long enough:

It can boost your chances of success by 100%.

Your best chance of success is with the Specialist Smokers Clinic

Getting help from the Harrow NHS Stop Smoking Service is easy. Just call 020 8966 1008, or ask your GP.

Make the call - it could save your life!



What you should know when trying to stop

You may have to try many times before you succeed. The important thing is to keep trying and to use effective treatments each time. Think of it like doing the lottery - but with a much higher chance of winning!

Smokers often think that smoking helps with stress - but in fact if you can remain completely smoke-free your stress levels will go down.

You may get a cough when you stop smoking; this is normal and only last a short while. Your general health will improve soon after you stop.

