

# SMOKING AND HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

This fact sheet is for smokers with high blood pressure. 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.

Smoking does not cause high blood pressure but if you have high blood pressure it increases your risk of a heart attack or other complications.

Inhaling smoke makes your blood more likely to clot. It also increases the furring of your arteries. This combination puts you at much higher risk of having a heart attack or a stroke.

As soon as you stop smoking, your risk of heart attack goes down.

## 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 can use NRT because it is simply replacing some of the nicotine you were already getting from cigarettes. However, you should consult your doctor.

You may be able to use Zyban; your GP or stop smoking counsellor will advise you on this.

It is rare but a few smokers experience a rise in blood pressure when they stop, so it is important to keep getting your blood pressure checked.

