

## - Smoking

# How to support a smoker trying to kick habit

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Ashbourne News Telegraph · 1 Sep 2021 · 33

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Although smoking has reduced massively over the last 70 years, worrying new figures show the boredom and stress of lockdown led to many more young people taking up the habit.

A poll funded by Cancer

Research UK found that during the first lockdown there was a 25% increase in 18 to 34-year-olds who smoke, which translated into a rise of more than 652,000 young adults. Bearing in mind that smoking rates had fallen from 82% in 1948 to 14.7% in 2019, it's a concerning trend.

Action on Smoking and Health (Ash), says most smokers want to quit – but they find it tough to give up without help.

Ash say only about 5% of unaided quit attempts result in smokers giving up for good, but quitting support can increase the chances of success fourfold.

And as well as official smoking cessation support like NHS Smokefree, the support of friends and family can be invaluable.

Hazel Cheeseman, Ash's deputy chief executive said: "smokers are most likely to quit successfully if they get help.

Long-term stopping smoking improves not just health but also wellbeing and has been estimated to have the same impact as antidepressants."

Here's how to help a mate who's trying to quit...

Encourage them to exercise – and do it with them

As well as simply being good for you, physical activity can help take smokers' minds off cigarettes, and make them feel healthier and hopefully less likely to light up and cancel out their exercise efforts. Offer to exercise with them – it'll be good for you too.

Help them identify and avoid situations that make them smoke

According to NHS Smokefree, there are many 'pattern triggers', like drinking alcohol or coffee, driving, or taking a break at work, that can lead people to light up.

Help your friend identify what their triggers are, and devise a plan to avoid them, perhaps by thinking of ways they can change their routine, suggesting replacements like e-cigarettes or chewing gum.

Keep them as busy as possible

Encourage them to do things to take their mind off cigarettes, like going for a walk with you, going to the cinema (where they can't smoke), and helping them change their routine so they're not doing things where they would normally have smoked.

### Try to quit yourself

If you smoke, try to quit with your mate, and if you don't smoke, make sure your social group knows your mate is trying to quit and ask them not to smoke when they're around.

### Help them avoid emotional triggers

Many smokers will reach for a cigarette if they're feeling stressed, lonely, bored or anxious – or perhaps even when they're happy or satisfied, NHS Smokefree advises on their website. Let them know you're always there to chat.

### Help them focus on the positives

There's much more to gain than to lose when people quit smoking, so keep drumming it into your friend how well they're doing and what they're gaining, both health-wise and financially.

### Point them towards official help

As well as support from you, there's plenty of official help out there – smokers trying to quit can call the NHS helpline on 0300 123 1044 or download the NHS Smokefree app.