

## Tip Sheet:

# Using Tobacco During Cancer Treatment

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Tobacco is a leading cause of cancer and preventable death in the United States. It is never too late to quit. Stopping tobacco use can help improve your health and your chances of a successful cancer treatment. Dana-Farber is a smoke-free campus, inside and out.

### Benefits of quitting

Studies show that people who stop using tobacco after a cancer diagnosis may:

- Respond better to cancer therapy than those who don't quit.
- Have fewer side effects from treatment, including infection, scarring, fatigue, breathing problems, and mouth sores.
- Recover faster from cancer treatment. For example, surgery wounds heal more slowly in patients who keep smoking.
- Have more energy.
- Have a better quality of life.
- Live longer.
- Lower their risk of having cancer come back or developing a second (different) cancer.
- Reduce their risk of other serious health problems linked to smoking, such as lung disease, heart attack, and stroke.

### Tell your care team

We encourage you to talk honestly about your tobacco use with your Dana-Farber care team, even if it is difficult to discuss. Your providers will support you in your plan to quit, and they can refer you to specialists for help.

### How do I quit?

Tobacco use is usually an addiction. It can be hard to quit, and often takes many tries. Some people can stop on their own, but research shows that people who have help are more likely to succeed. There are many tools, including in-person and telephone counseling, medications, smartphone apps, and support groups. Using a combination of approaches seems to work best.

### The first steps:

- Commit to quitting.
- Tell your friends, family, and co-workers.
- Prepare for challenges you may face, such as nicotine cravings.
- Remove tobacco products from your home, car, and workplace.
- Talk with your health-care providers.
- Find out whether your health insurance plan covers stop-smoking services.

### Consider counseling and other support

- **Dana-Farber:** Call Social Work at 617-632-3301 for information about available classes or groups at Dana-Farber or other local hospitals.

- **Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program:** Call the Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) for free counseling and other support, or visit [makesmokinghistory.org](http://makesmokinghistory.org).
- **American Cancer Society:** Find a free telephone-based program in your area by calling the society at 1-800-227-2345, or visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org) and search for "How to Quit Smoking."
- **National Cancer Institute:** Offers free, confidential information and support for quitting. Call the NCI smoking quitline at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848) or visit [Smokefree.gov](http://Smokefree.gov).
- **CVS Minute Clinic:** Meet with a nurse practitioner to create a smoking-cessation plan based on your needs and goals. Visit [cvs.com](http://cvs.com) and search for "smoking cessation"
- **Other resources:** There are support groups, online communities, and smartphone apps to help people reach their stop-smoking goals. For example, the American Cancer Society and National Cancer Institute offer apps with tips, encouragement, and tools to track goals.

### Ask about medications

Talk with your doctor about medications to help you quit. There are several medicines that reduce withdrawal symptoms and cravings for nicotine, the addictive substance found naturally in tobacco. Ask about possible side effects.

- **Prescription medicines** taken by pill include varenicline (also called Chantix) and bupropion (also called Wellbutrin or Zyban). These drugs do not contain nicotine and require a prescription.
- **Nicotine replacement therapy products** provide a small amount of nicotine and include nicotine gum, lozenges, skin patches, nasal sprays, and inhalers. They are available over the counter at pharmacies or by prescription.

### Are any tobacco products safe?

No. All forms of tobacco are harmful and addictive. These include tobacco products that some people think are relatively safe, such as electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes), water pipes (hookahs), and smokeless tobacco (chewing tobacco, snuff). E-cigarettes are not approved as a quit-smoking method.

Secondhand smoke – the smoke that's exhaled by a smoker or comes from a burning tobacco product – also contains thousands of chemicals, and some of them are toxic. Children and adults who are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke have an increased risk of health problems, from asthma to cancer. So quitting helps both you and the people around you.

### For more information

To access the internet during your visits to Dana-Farber, consider using one of the free computer workstations in the Blum Patient and Family Resource Center, or borrow an iPad from the Shapiro Center for Patients and Families. Both centers are on the first floor of the Yawkey Center.

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