Taking Control:
Different Ways to Quit Tobacco

When it comes to quitting smoking, no one can choose which method is right for you but yourself. But one thing is for sure: you'll have a much better chance of reaching your goal with nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and support from a smoking cessation counselor. Studies show that 10 times more people are able to stay quit over 12 months using NRT and counseling than those who quit cold turkey.

Nicotine replacement therapy works by releasing small amounts of nicotine into the body, without the other harmful chemicals in cigarette smoke. Nicotine replacement therapy can help lessen the withdrawal symptoms many people have when they quit smoking, or even get rid of them completely.

One well-known type of NRT is the patch. It works by putting nicotine into the bloodstream through a patch that sticks to the skin. It works for 16 to 24 hours and releases a steady level of nicotine.

The patch is safe, as long as you are not using any tobacco. The patch doesn't contain tar or carbon, two chemicals that are connected with causing cancer and other diseases. The patch delivers the nicotine more evenly into your system than cigarette smoking, so it's not as hard on your heart and circulatory system.

If you are a cigarette smoker, NRT gum, which some people prefer to the patch or use in addition to the patch, can be bought over the counter. But please note that you must consult your doctor before using any form of NRT if you:

- have a medical condition (such as heart disease or high blood pressure)
- are taking medications (especially drugs for asthma or depression)

Unfortunately, the patch has not been studied in people who use smokeless tobacco. If you are a smokeless tobacco user and want to know more about using the patch, please talk to your doctor.

“Fading” cigarettes or tobacco means gradually cutting down until you quit. It’s a start, but there is always the temptation to reach for just one more. And when smokers try to cut back, they make up for it by inhaling more deeply and holding the smoke in longer. Smokeless tobacco users may make up for cutting back by switching to a brand with more nicotine in it. So in the end, the amount of nicotine you take in and your addiction to it may not change much at all.

Although many Laborers think that quitting cold turkey is the way to go, the truth is that less than 4 out of 100 tobacco users actually stay quit over 12 months when they quit this way. You hear about people quitting cold turkey a lot—but that’s because when they quit this way, they go back to using tobacco and need to quit again and again.

Be aware of what triggers you to smoke. Then try to avoid this trigger, change it, or find an alternative.