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## No Smoking Day 2024: Date, history, significance, 10 tips to quit smoking

By Zarafshan Shiraz, New Delhi



No Smoking Day 2024: Here's all you need to know about the date, history and significance of No Smoking Day and 10 expert tips to quit smoking



No Smoking Day 2024: Date, history, significance, 10 tips to quit smoking (Image by GrumpyBeere from Pixabay)

**Smoking**, a habit of many, is associated with severe **health** hazards, often leading to lung **cancer** but smoking **tobacco** is a habit that people find difficult to leave, quit or decrease as **cigarette** addiction is a tricky thing to tackle because while the harmful effects of smoking are known to all, there's neither much social censure nor personal awareness regarding how rapidly things can deteriorate on the health front hence, an annual 'No Smoking Day' is observed every year to raise awareness against the detrimental effects of smoking tobacco. India has over 26 crore tobacco users, cutting across all demographics and genders and more than 10 lakh people are losing their lives every year due to tobacco-related diseases while passive smoking too causes severe health problems, often leading to asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia.

### History:

The practice of observing a 'No Smoking Day' originally came up in the United Kingdom, and the first of many such days to come was the Ash Wednesday in 1984. The date was later fixed as the second Wednesday in March.

### Significance:

No Smoking Day is now observed as an annual health awareness day, intended to help smokers who want to quit smoking. In 2010, the day was promoted with a campaign titled "Break free", which encouraged smokers to literally break free from the chains of tobacco addiction on the occasion of 'No Smoking Day'.

With the turn of the decade, the urgency for such awareness is at its prime, more than ever. Several celebrities and media personalities also take the occasion to make public service announcements against smoking.

### Tips to quit smoking:

In an interview with HT Lifestyle, Psychologist Dr Malini Saba, Founder and Chairman at Anannke Foundation, recommended five simple strategies to help you resist the impulse to smoke or use tobacco when a craving occurs.

- 1. Find a valid reason:** It can be a personal reason, such as improving health or reducing the chance of acquiring diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease, or other ailments; protecting your family from passive smoking; it can also be a spiritual one. You must carefully analyse the reason for quitting smoking so that it is convincing enough to overcome the desire to smoke.
- 2. Avoiding triggers:** Triggers may include situations in which you previously smoked or chewed tobacco, such as at parties, when drinking, or under stress. Identifying trigger situations, avoiding them totally or coping with them with non-tobacco coping mechanisms can be helpful. For example, if you usually smoke after lunch, try eating a piece of dark chocolate, which contains nicotine. Dark chocolate boosts serotonin and dopamine, improving mood and reducing stress but dark chocolate is lung-friendly.
- 3. Snack on it:** Give your tongue something to do to combat cigarette cravings. Chew gum or hard candy without sugar. Or nibble on raw carrots, almonds, fox-nuts, or sunflower seeds—something crunchy and delicious. While attempting to quit smoking, you should not diet. It may put your body under additional stress and can backfire horribly. Try to keep your routine simple and consume more fruits, eggies, whole grains, and protein, all of which are beneficial to your health.
- 4. Hobbies and physical activity:** Physical activity can help to distract you from your desire to smoke. Physical activities, such as exercise, sports, yoga, brisk walks, deep breathing and even dancing, might provide a distraction from tobacco cravings and diminish their intensity. If it is not possible to engage in physical activity, hobbies such as writing, art, and crafts, meditation, stitching, planting, journal writing, cleaning, painting, visualisation, massage, or listening to soothing music can be just as beneficial.
- 5. Don't have only one:** You may be tempted to smoke or chew tobacco just once but don't kid yourself into thinking that this is the point where you can quit. When you start with one, you almost always end up wanting more than one. And there's always the possibility that you'll start smoking again.

Adding to the list of tips, Dr Anuneet Sabharwal, MBBS, MD Psychiatrist, Founder and Director of The Happy Tree (De-addiction and Mental Health Hospital), suggested five simple tips to fight tobacco cravings

**1- Try nicotine replacement therapy:** Discuss nicotine replacement therapy with your doctor. A doctor can help with nicotine addiction by replacing tobacco with slower-releasing nicotine products. Nicotine replacement therapy aims to reduce nicotine until the patient can quit. This reduces withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Nicotine chewing gum, lozenges, and patches are available over-the-counter, but an inhaler or nasal spray is usually prescribed. E-cigarettes are a popular alternative to traditional cigarettes, but they're not safer or more successful than nicotine-replacement therapy.

**2- Seek support from family and friends:** Inform your close friends, family, and other that you are attempting to quit smoking. They can urge you to continue, particularly when you are tempted to smoke. You can also join a support group or consult a therapist. Join an online programme to help you quit smoking or, read a quitter's blog and offer uplifting comments to someone who may be experiencing smoking cravings.

**3- Ginseng Tea:** Ginseng can aid in the reduction of nicotine addiction by reducing the influence of dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain associated with pleasure that is released when smoking tobacco. Daily consumption of ginseng tea might consequently lower cravings.

**4- Delay:** Tell yourself that you must first wait 10 minutes before giving in to your tobacco cravings. Use all means necessary to divert your attention at this time. Instead of smoking, try going to a smoke-free public space, listening to music, or doodling. These easy approaches may be adequate to help you quit your cigarette addiction.

**5- Milk and dairy items:** Milk and other dairy products can exacerbate the flavour of cigarettes, producing a harsh aftertaste that is unpleasant. This impact can assist in quitting smoking.

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