Beating the Nicotine Habit

According to the American Heart Association, cigarette smoking is the most important preventable cause of premature death in the United States. Smoking accounts for more than 440,000 deaths each year. People begin using tobacco products for a variety of reasons, but those who wish to quit often find that it’s easier said than done. If you’re one of the people who have decided to kick the habit, it’s important for you to understand that you aren’t weak or morally impaired if you struggle. Help is available, and there are strategies that can make your journey easier.

First, identify why you want to quit. Knowing that tobacco is “bad for you” probably won’t be strong enough to outweigh your cravings. Intellectually, we know that many of the things we do each day are “bad for us.” Once you have really made up your mind to quit, you’ll be better able to come up with a plan that will help you succeed.

Recognize that about 95% of the people who try to quit cold turkey relapse. Withdrawal symptoms can be brutal to try to handle alone. Plan to use some type of therapy or medication to help ease your cravings. It’s also helpful to have a buddy in your corner whom you can turn to when you feel your resolve slipping.

There are a variety of nicotine replacement products on the market. Some are available over the counter and others are available only by prescription. It is helpful to combine this type of therapy with a behavioral therapy program. This will help you identify the “triggers” that have lead you to smoke at certain times so that you can recognize them and also make changes, if necessary. For example, many people smoke in conjunction with drinking alcohol when they go out with friends. If this is a strong trigger for you, you may have to modify what you do when you go out with friends. Some people may re-learn their drinking behaviors so that they can enjoy a beer without lighting up. Others may have to avoid drinking because the link between the two behaviors is too strong for them.

A prime reason that some people smoke is to handle stress. If this is a reason that you smoke, it will be helpful to find ways to avoid stressful situations if possible. Also, you will need to learn different ways to cope with the stress. You might replace the cigarette with relaxing music or a brisk walk. Begin your efforts at a time that is less stressful for you (finals week, for example, is not a good time).

Once you’ve put the tobacco away, clean your house and personal items thoroughly to get rid of the tobacco smell and residue.

Nicotine is addictive. Don’t be afraid to seek help if you’re trying to quit.

For more information, or to get started, contact the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT NOW (1-800-784-8669). For Spanish, call 1-800-793-1552. This is a free service for all Oklahomans who want to quit the use of tobacco products. If you lack health insurance, you may be able to receive nicotine replacement products in addition to counseling and personal support.
Practice Fireworks Safety

What would Fourth of July celebrations be without fireworks? Well, safer perhaps, but certainly less fun. That doesn’t mean that you can’t enjoy these holiday staples as long as you remember that 1) these are small explosive devices, and 2) young children should never be too close to or unsupervised near fireworks.

While most adults recognize the potential dangers involved in handling fireworks, children and adolescents often do not. In 2007, 7 fireworks related deaths were reported and nearly 7,000 people were treated in emergency rooms for injuries.

Sparklers are not safer than fireworks. Although they are less likely to cause the severe types of injuries that firecrackers and bottle rockets may cause, sparklers can reach over 1,000 degrees. In fact, sparklers account for over half of the injuries to children under age 5, and about 10% of fireworks related injuries overall.

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that children and their families should attend public fireworks displays rather than purchase fireworks for home use. This practice allows everyone in the family to relax and let the pro’s take care of the pyrotechnics.

If your family does choose to purchase your own fireworks, the following tips can help make that a safer venture:

- Never let children handle the fireworks. These should be handled by a responsible adult only.
- Do not consume alcohol or drugs when handling fireworks.
- Use them on a hard surface in a clear area.
- Keep clear of the fireworks. You want to observe the entertainment, not be the entertainment.
- Keep water and/or a fire extinguisher nearby.
- Leave the “duds” alone. If it doesn’t work the first time, don’t keep trying it.
- Never use fireworks as weapons. It might seem funny to shoot at Uncle Billy’s head at the time. Later, in the emergency room, it will be a real bummer.
- Use caution around animals.

Pre-Plan for Your Baby’s Health

Every expectant parent hopes for a healthy baby. After months of waiting, we anxiously examine the new little boy or girl, checking all the toes and fingers and other body parts, as well. Good health doesn’t begin at birth, though. It starts in mom’s body. What happens during pregnancy can affect the child’s health for life.

The U.S. has one of the highest infant mortality rates of any industrialized country, and that is partly because as many as 20% of pregnant women receive inadequate or no prenatal care. Women who think they may be pregnant should see a doctor as soon as possible to learn healthy habits and to monitor the baby’s health. The doctor can assess any potential risks for the baby.

Eating a poor diet during pregnancy or while nursing may cause long-lasting health problems for the child, including a higher risk for developing diabetes. Women who use tobacco products or alcohol should stop at least during the pregnancy. They should also be aware of potential environmental hazards such as using chemicals or taking certain medications.

Exercising during pregnancy is also important for both mom and baby. If you haven’t exercised prior to the pregnancy, ask your doctor about safe exercises to begin. Walking is a good aerobic activity that can usually be done for the entire pregnancy unless bed rest or other restrictions are required. Stretching exercises are good for maintaining flexibility and preparing for labor. Kegel exercises are also important for strengthening the pelvic floor muscles.
Sometimes, Less is More

Some people learned to run the washing machine and dishwasher years ago, before the era of high-efficiency appliances. Others operate on the belief that if a little soap (or other cleaning agent) is good, then a lot must be better. The reality is that using the recommended amount of the product leads to a better result. When too much detergent is used, the appliance is not able to completely rinse away the residue. This can lead to potential skin irritation and can shorten the life of the appliance. Soap residue on your dishes can attract germs as well as potentially leading to the ingestion of the detergent. One way to test to see if you’re overdoing the laundry detergent is to place one “clean” towel in the washer and run water on it. Allow it to agitate for a few minutes in the plain water. If suds occur, then you’re using more product than you need.

When using cleaning products, follow the label directions carefully. Again, using more product than you need doesn’t get things any cleaner, and it may require that you rinse more than once to remove excess cleaner.

Always use cleaning products with adequate ventilation. Never mix cleaning products to get a “better” result because doing so may cause toxic fumes or other chemical reactions. Whenever possible, use more environmentally friendly products.

Tips for Healthy Cooking

1. Preserve the nutrients and colors in vegetables by cooking them quickly (steaming or stir-frying).
2. Make your smoothies work for you. Freeze a variety of fruits so that you can throw some in a blender with fat-free or low-fat yogurt, juice, protein powder, skim milk, etc. Get several servings of fruit in one smoothie.
3. Canned, processed, and preserved vegetables often have very high sodium content. Look for “low sodium” products, or try the frozen varieties.
4. Prepare muffins and quick breads with less saturated fat and fewer calories. Use three ripe, very well-mashed bananas instead of 1/2 cup of fat. Or, substitute 1 cup of applesauce for one cup of fat.
5. In baking, use plain fat-free or low-fat yogurt or sour cream.
6. Use fat-free or 1% milk instead of whole or 2% milk.

It’s Okay to Ask for Help

With fluctuations in the economy and the high rate of unemployment in recent months, coupled with other bad situations such as the gulf oil spill, many families are stressed to the breaking point. There have been sharp increases in mood disorders such as depression and behavioral issues such as domestic violence and alcohol and substance abuse.

To make matters worse, children who live in high stress families seem to have a greater risk of becoming obese than children who live without the stress. This would stand to reason since the stress hormones have been associated with carrying more belly fat, getting less sleep, and eating more less nutritious foods.

If your family is feeling the stress right now, know that it is perfectly okay to ask for help. Reach out to a friend, a family member, your physician, or even a help hotline. The important thing is to reduce your stress and help your family.

Use the right amount of product to get the maximum cleaning and safety.

Make that muffin more healthful and nutritious (but just as tasty) with some simple substitutions.

Having someone to confide in can help lower your stress.
Asparagus, Tomato, and Red Pepper French Bread Pizza

- 1 cup diced asparagus
- 1 cup diced Roma tomatoes
- 1 cup diced red bell pepper
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 loaf French bread, about 8 inches long, sliced in half and cut into 4-inch sections
- 1 cup pizza sauce
- 1 cup reduced-fat shredded mozzarella cheese

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly coat a baking sheet with cooking spray (for a crispier pizza, bake on a pizza stone positioned on the lowest oven shelf).

In a small bowl, add the asparagus, tomatoes, and pepper. Add the garlic and toss gently to coat evenly.

Arrange the French bread on the baking sheet. Add 1/4 cup of the pizza sauce and 1/4 cup of the vegetable mixture to each section. Sprinkle each with 1/4 cup mozzarella cheese. Bake until the cheese is lightly browned and the vegetables are tender, about 8-10 minutes.

Serve immediately.

Per Serving (1 4-inch section)

- 252 calories
- 13 g protein
- 36 g carbohydrate
- 6 g total fat
- 3 g saturated fat
- 2 g monounsaturated fat
- 18 mg cholesterol
- 650 mg sodium
- 4 g fiber
- 327 mg potassium
- 274 mg calcium

This is a great way to get a fast lunch when you’re on the go (and it has the Asparagus is packed with flavor and nutrients and weighs in at only 32 calories per cup.

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Thanks to all who serve or have served.

Student Support Services houses a variety of services designed to enhance the performance and well-being of students at Oklahoma City Community College.

- Services to Students with Disabilities, including providing appropriate accommodations for documented disabilities, interpreting and captioning services for deaf and hard of hearing students, and assistive technology.
- Professional counseling by a licensed provider.
- Learning support specialist to assist with academic needs such as learning styles, study skills, test-taking, and general health and wellness issues.
- TRIO Grant Programs (Upward Bound and Trio Student Support Services) designed to help first generation college students learn more about college before they arrive and how to be more successful once they are here.

For more information about our services and how to access them, please visit our website at http://www.occc.edu/support/ or call us at 682-7520. We are located on the first floor of the Main Building near SEM Entry 3.