

Smoking Desire Strategies to Manage

After you quit, you will have urges for a cigarette. Most urges pass in a few minutes. The urges become less frequent and less intense with time. A few minutes spent craving a cigarette can seem like forever. When you learn to cope with these cravings, you increase your ability to successfully quit smoking.

Here are some tips to manage urges, called the ACE strategy:

A = Avoid

C = Cope

E = Escape

Avoid

You can prevent smoking urges if you avoid or change situations that make you want to smoke. For example, you may want to avoid:

- Places where people are likely to smoke
- Smoking break areas at work
- Stressful situations (when possible)
- Places where you smoked before
- Smoking sections of restaurants
- Food and drinks that make you want to smoke (coffee, alcohol)
- People who are smoking
- Feeling run down by taking good care of yourself

Some of these may seem unreasonable but remember, this is not forever. Once you can handle your urges without smoking, avoiding certain situations may not be necessary. And remember, the number and intensity of your urges will likely decrease with time – so hang in there!

Cope

If you cannot avoid or leave a situation that triggers an urge to smoke, your only option is to cope with the urge until it passes. You have to find other things to associate with your smoking triggers. The idea is to find an alternative to smoking. It should be one that serves a similar function to smoking (such as, relaxation, relieve boredom) or distracts you long enough for the urge to pass. Keep in mind that it will take some time to identify all your triggers and change how you respond to them.

Ask your health care provider for a copy of **Smoking: Preparing to Quit** to find out more about coping with triggers.

Escape

If you get into a situation that is too overwhelming - ESCAPE! For example, if someone starts smoking around you and you cannot ask him or her not to smoke, excuse yourself and leave. This is helpful even if it is only for a few minutes. As you get stronger, you will need to escape from fewer situations, but do not be afraid to do it if you have to.