

Why Women Smoke

Women and Smoking



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Table of Contents

Why we wrote this book	4
Why do women smoke?	6
Do women smoke for different reasons than men?	9
Why do women start smoking?	11
How do women smoke?	12
Why do women keep smoking?	13
Talk to yourself about quitting	15
Getting ready to cut down or quit	23
Cutting down or quitting	27
A final word about women and smoking	34

Why we wrote this book

This book was written for women who smoke. It was written to help women understand more about their smoking habits.

The facts are:

- more teenage girls than boys are beginning to smoke
- women often smoke for different reasons than men
- there are different reasons that keep women from quitting

A group of single mothers wrote this book. All of us smoke cigarettes and would like to quit. We know:

- smoking is not healthy
- there are fewer places we can smoke
- smoking costs a lot
- children are healthier in smoke free places

Some of us have cut down on the number of cigarettes we smoke. But it's hard to make changes. This book was written to give you some ideas about how to change your smoking habits.

The women who wrote this book believe:

- women are special
- women deserve to live healthy lives
- women can make choices about smoking

We hope this book will help you make these healthy choices for yourself.



Why do women smoke?

All women are different. You will tell different stories about how you started to smoke. You all have different reasons why you keep on smoking. But women have some of the same experiences, too. These might help you understand more about why you smoke.

1. Often women are expected to behave in certain ways.

Some of those ways are:

- to think of other people first
- not to lose your temper
- to stay calm
- to be nice all the time
- to keep going no matter what happens

Sometimes smoking gives you a chance to get your feelings under control.

2. Women have too much to do.

- You might be busy taking care of your families and your homes
- You might raise your kids on your own
- You might look after your parents
- You might go to school
- You might have a full time job

So there is often too little time and energy left to take care of yourself.

3. Women's lives are very stressful.

- You might not have enough money
- You might live with someone who abuses you
- You might have a disability



Smoking is a quick and easy way to reward yourself.

It gives you a chance to sit down and relax.

4. Cigarette ads encourage women to smoke. We are all affected by magazine ads whether we know it or not. Ads never show women who use cigarettes to cope with stress.

Instead the women in these ads:

- have a lot of fun
- have lots of money
- are thin and sexy
- have lots of friends

It's no wonder so many young women are starting to smoke!



Do women smoke for different reasons than men?

In some ways, yes!

1. More women smoke as a way to deal with anger.

Many people feel it's wrong for women to show their anger. So you might smoke instead of showing your anger.

2. More women smoke as a way to deal with

depression. Smoking a cigarette is like spending time with a good friend. Smoking can make you feel like you are not alone.

3. Women have different pressures to deal with. Most women are expected to do everything! Many people feel raising children and taking care of the house is "women's work". This is true even if you work at another job! So you might have a cigarette to give yourself a chance to relax.



4. Women are expected to be thin. Many women are afraid of gaining weight. So you might smoke a cigarette instead of eating something.

5. Many women don't have enough money. They don't have the time or money to give themselves a treat. So you might feel you deserve to smoke.

6. Some women feel helpless. Many things can make you feel this way, such as:

- you don't have enough money
- you raise your children alone
- you live with someone who abuses you
- you don't have a good friend

So when things seem out of control you might smoke because it feels like spending time with an old friend. Smoking might make you feel secure for a few minutes.

Why do women start smoking?



This is Linda's story.

Linda had her first cigarette when she was fourteen. She was dating an older boy who smoked. She thought smoking looked grownup and sophisticated. Her first cigarette made her feel dizzy. She felt like throwing up. But she did it again and again. She thought it was sexy and glamorous. It made her feel like she belonged. She knew smoking was something she could get used to.

We were not born wanting to smoke. Most of us hated the taste of our first cigarette.

Take a few minutes to think about your first cigarette.

Why did you smoke it?

Who were you with?

What did you enjoy about it?

How do women smoke?

Each woman has different smoking habits. Keep track of the number of cigarettes you smoke in a day or in a week. Write it down. This can help you figure out your habits, such as:

- What are you doing when you smoke?
- How do you feel when you smoke?
- When do you smoke more?

Think about your first cigarette of the day.
Ask yourself these questions:

- Where do you smoke it?
- How are you feeling?
- Do you smoke alone?

Ask yourself the same questions about the other cigarettes you smoke during the day.

Why do women keep smoking?

Many things encourage women to keep smoking. It's not always easy to see them, but some of them are:

- the way you feel about yourself
- the way you feel about other people
- the way you are treated by other people

Here are examples of how your smoking is affected by these things. You might smoke because:

1. You feel stressed or angry. You might think the only way to control your feelings is to smoke.

2. You're afraid of gaining weight. There is a lot of pressure in our society for women to be thin. It's true that smoking can suppress your appetite. You might be afraid to try to quit smoking because you don't want to gain weight. In fact, this doesn't always happen. Your weight might go up, go down, or stay the same. It depends on your quit smoking plan.

3. Smoking is like an old friend. It can become a part of your life that makes you feel safe and comfortable. A cigarette isn't really a friend. But this idea makes it hard to give up smoking.

4. Smoking is a way to treat yourself. It's often a reward when you don't have the time or money to reward yourself in other ways.

5. Smoking is sometimes fun. It can be a social time. You might have friends or family who smoke. Then smoking makes you feel as if you belong.

6. Smoking is addictive. This means you develop a craving for tobacco. A craving is feeling like you can't live without something.



Most women wish they didn't smoke. But there are so many reasons why women smoke. It makes it hard for women to cut down or quit.

Remember: if you want to cut down or quit, do it your own way. You know what works best for you. You can make the best choice for your situation!

Talk to yourself about quitting

Tell yourself these things:

1. Most women try to stop smoking many times. Just **trying** to quit is something to feel good about! Give yourself credit for cutting down. Be patient with yourself. Quitting is hard work. It might take a while.

Think of this:

Every time you cut down or quit smoking, you are learning something new. This will help prepare you for the next time you cut down or quit. Try to feel proud of the times you try. Say to yourself " I was able to quit for two days. Maybe next time, it'll be easier."

Most women try to quit smoking at least seven times before they give up smoking for good.

2. You won't necessarily gain weight if you cut down or quit smoking. Gaining a few pounds is healthier than smoking too much. Some women gain a few pounds and then lose them again. But if you're worried about gaining weight try to:

- get more exercise
- eat low fat things such as fruits, vegetables or whole wheat crackers
- drink more water



3. It's OK to get angry instead of smoking. You might feel it's better to smoke than to get angry. You might be afraid to cut down or quit in case you show your anger. It's OK for women to feel angry.

Try these healthy and safe ways of dealing with your anger:

- talk to a friend
- go for a walk
- yell or cry in the bathroom
- scrub the kitchen floor
- write down your feelings

**But there are times when it is not safe to show your anger. One example is if you live with someone who abuses you. Another is if you're afraid you'll take your anger out on your kids. In these situations, find someone you can talk to about these problems. You might call a shelter or a crisis centre.
Remember, you are not alone.**

4. You can enjoy life without smoking. Some women think quitting smoking means they'll never again enjoy certain things, such as:

- morning coffee
- talking on the phone
- going out with friends

Or you might be afraid you can't cope with bad news or disappointment without a cigarette. This isn't true. After a while women who've quit smoking say they have just as much fun and cope just as well without cigarettes.

5. Cigarettes are very addictive. The nicotine in tobacco is a very powerful and addictive drug. If you stop smoking, you might feel worse before you feel better. Here are some of the things you might experience. You might:

- feel nervous or angry
- want to eat more
- cough
- have trouble sleeping



These are "withdrawal effects". You get them because your body isn't used to going without nicotine. But the withdrawal effects mean your body is getting better. It means you're getting used to living without cigarettes.

It usually takes about three days for the nicotine to get out of your system. But it can take a few weeks for your body to return to normal. And it's usually much longer before you stop thinking about cigarettes.

But here are the good things you can look forward to. You will:

- not be short of breath
- have more energy
- feel good about having more control in your life
- have more money

Withdrawal is hard. But it doesn't last for ever. It will get easier with time. And there are ways to deal with the uncomfortable feelings. Remember: the withdrawal effects are signs your body is getting better.

6. Tobacco use is the biggest cause of death and disease for Canadian women. It can lead to:

- heart disease or lung cancer
- other kinds of cancer
- trouble with your period
- early menopause or "change of life"
- breathing problems and lung disease
- weaker bones that break easily when you're older (osteoporosis)

Women who smoke might:

- be short of breath
- have less energy
- have upset stomachs
- find it harder to become pregnant



Cigarette smoke also hurts your family and friends. If you smoke, your kids are much more likely to smoke. Even if your kids don't smoke, they can develop problems just from being around other people's smoke, such as:

- breathing problems
- itchy and sore eyes
- headaches and allergies
- a greater chance of developing cancer and heart disease



But, if you quit smoking:

- your heart rate slows down and your circulation improves
- you will feel better and have more energy
- you have a better chance of having a healthy baby
- in twelve hours your body starts to heal
- in one year, your chances of developing heart disease are reduced a lot
- in ten years, your chance of developing lung cancer is the same as a woman who has never smoked

When you quit smoking your health improves almost immediately. So will the health of others around you.



Getting ready to cut down or quit.

You are a special person. You are worth taking care of. But sometimes you might find that hard to believe.

Women often don't feel very good about themselves. It's hard to find the time and energy to take care of yourself. But it's important to be good to yourself. It's even more important to take care of yourself if you're thinking about cutting down on smoking.

Try these ideas:

- do something everyday that you like to do
- keep telling yourself "I'm worth taking care of"
- spend time with people who make you feel good



Make sure you:

1. Eat healthy food. How you feel is affected by what you eat. If you feel depressed or tired, eat something healthy instead of smoking a cigarette. Healthy food will give you more energy and help you cope with the things you have to do.

Smoking robs your body of important vitamins you need. So if you smoke, eat more fruit and vegetables. Try these ideas:

- a glass of milk to help you stay calm
- a banana to help reduce tension
- carrots to help keep lungs healthy

2. Spend time with friends. When you're trying to cut down on smoking, spend time with friends who support you. They can help you feel better about yourself. Ask a friend to help you. Don't feel guilty about your friends who still smoke. You might find you have to stay away from these friends for a while. **Remember: it's OK to ask them not to smoke around you.**

3. Spend time alone. Take fifteen minutes each day just to be alone. Do something relaxing. Think of something that makes you feel happy.

4. Exercise. It doesn't have to take a lot of time or money. Take walks or turn on the radio and dance. Exercise with your kids or with a friend. Try to exercise for twenty minutes every day for three months. See if it makes a difference.

Regular exercise can:

- curb your appetite
- burn extra calories
- relieve stress
- help you feel good about yourself
- give you more energy

Exercise often makes it easier to cut down on cigarettes.



Try these exercises:

1. Stand with your knees bent.

Let your head drop to your chest.
Slowly move it from side to side.

Move your shoulders up to your ears.



Then let them drop.

Raise your arms and stretch towards
the ceiling.

Put your hands on your hips and make circles
with your elbows.

Put your hands on your hips and slowly turn from
the waist. Try to look behind you.
Now turn the other way.

2. Lie on the floor on your back.

Bend your knees and put your feet flat on the floor. Put your
arms on the floor beside you. Pull your tummy in and press
your back into the floor. Now relax.

Bring your knees up to your chest and hold them with your
arms. Move your legs slowly from side to side.

Do these exercises five to ten times each.

Cutting down or quitting.

Here are some ideas people have used to change their smoking habits. Different ideas will work for different women. Try the ideas that work for you.

1. Make a list. Write down what you like about smoking, such as:

- it makes you feel less tense
- it gives you a break from the kids
- you like the feel of a cigarette

Then write down what you don't like about smoking, such as:

- the cost
- the smell
- shortness of breath
- yellow fingers
- the risk of getting cancer

Next, write down the good things about quitting or cutting down on smoking. For example, you will:

- save money and have more energy
- not worry about being in places where you can't smoke
- have more control in your life

Finally, write down the negative things about quitting or cutting down. For example, you will have to deal with friends and family who still smoke. Or you will have to find new ways to cope with stress.

Lists can make it clearer why you smoke. They help you see



why you might want to cut down or quit smoking. And they point out the places where it can be hard to cut down or quit.

2. Change your smoking triggers. A trigger is something that makes you want to smoke a cigarette. Smoking a cigarette can be triggered by how you feel. You might smoke when you feel angry or afraid. Or you might have a cigarette when you feel happy and relaxed.

Many things you do every day might be smoking triggers, such as when you:

- drink coffee
- are with your smoking friends
- relax after a chore
- talk on the telephone



Think of other things you do each day that are triggers for your smoking. Then think of ways to change your habits so that you don't smoke as often. Try these ideas:

- take your coffee into a different room
- stop drinking coffee for awhile
- keep your cigarettes in a different place
- go for a walk
- play with a puzzle
- take some deep breaths
- doodle, sew, or knit
- keep lots of things to chew on, such as carrots, gum, apples, or tooth picks



3. Change your smoking habits. Try these tricks:

- change your brand
- inhale less deeply
- stub out your cigarette earlier
- put your cigarette in an ashtray instead of holding it
- keep your cigarettes and matches in different places
- limit the places where you can smoke
- keep track of the number of cigarettes you smoke. Write it down on a piece of paper in your cigarette package. Here's an example of a record.

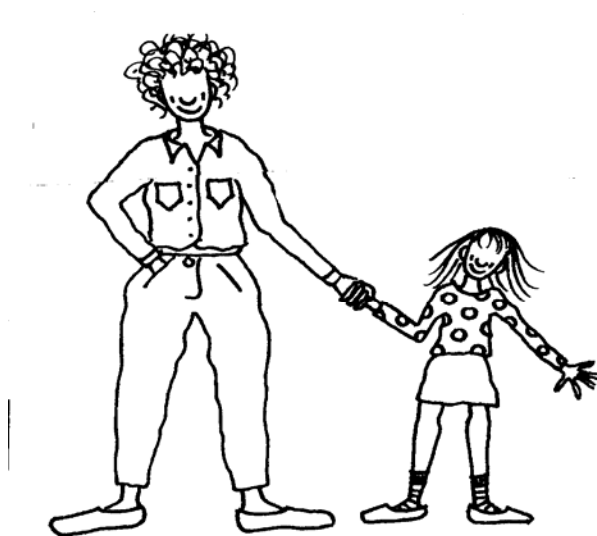
<i>Time</i>	<i>Doing What?</i>	<i>Feeling How?</i>
8:45	<i>kids to school</i>	<i>frustrated</i>
9:10	<i>just sitting</i>	<i>relaxed</i>
9:20	<i>dishes</i>	<i>lonely</i>
9:55	<i>just sitting</i>	<i>bored</i>
10:30	<i>coffee w Pam</i>	<i>happy</i>
10:45	<i>more coffee</i>	<i>happy</i>
11:20	<i>phoning school</i>	<i>angry</i>
<i>... and so on!</i>		

Try anything that will make it harder for you to smoke.

4. Wait. Try to cut down on the number of cigarettes you smoke in a day. For example, don't smoke as soon as you wake up in the morning. Wait until you have washed your face and made a cup of coffee. Make the time between all your cigarettes longer. Try these ideas instead of having your next cigarette :

- take a walk
- do a chore
- read

It doesn't matter what you do, just keep busy!



5. Talk to your doctor. Your doctor might have other suggestions to help you cut down or quit smoking.

6. Find or start a support group. Sometimes you need someone else's support to make healthy changes in your life. It could be one other person, such as a smoke-free buddy. It could be a group of women. It's often helpful for women to share ideas and feelings about smoking. It could be fun!

7. Set a day to quit. Remember, when things aren't going well, it's hard to deny yourself cigarettes. Quitting or cutting down will be easier if you feel good about how your life is going.

So choose a time when you're feeling good about yourself. Try to make some plans that will let you be as relaxed as possible. For example, you could ask someone to take your kids for a few hours.

A final word about women and smoking

Remember: you deserve to be healthy. It's OK to take care of yourself. It's hard to take the time. But it's important.

This book can help you to start to:

- learn more about your cigarette habit
- believe you deserve good things
- do things just for yourself

It can help you discover it's important

- get some exercise
- eat healthy foods
- learn to relax



Some of you might want to begin to cut down.

Some of you might want to quit.

You can decide what you want to do about your smoking.

You know what's best for your situation.