

**3 My sponsor uses tobacco and says tobacco use isn't an issue. Is that right?**

Tobacco use may not be a concern for your sponsor at this time, but there are many good reasons for you to quit now.

Your sponsor may not know about the health benefits of quitting for people in recovery.

**4 My sponsor or counselor says to think about "first things first" – to focus on not drinking or drugging. Should I wait to deal with tobacco?**

In recovery, it's important to stay away from all mood-altering drugs. Tobacco use can act as a trigger for using alcohol and other drugs.

Research shows that most people have a better chance at long term recovery if they also quit tobacco.

**Using medicine and counseling support together makes you nearly three times as likely to quit for good!**

- Talk to your healthcare providers to see how they can help. Check with your health insurance company to see what is covered.
- For example, MassHealth covers all stop-smoking medicines and counseling to help you quit.
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**Make smoking history.**

Massachusetts Department  
of Public Health Bureau  
of Substance Addiction Services  
[mass.gov/dph/bsas](http://mass.gov/dph/bsas)

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**12 Questions  
About Tobacco Use  
from People in Recovery from  
Substance Use Disorders**



**1 Why should I think about quitting cigarettes, cigars, electronic cigarettes, and other tobacco products now that I'm in recovery?**

Quitting tobacco now will improve your health and help your recovery. A leading cause of death for people in recovery is illness from tobacco.

Research shows quitting tobacco use helps your chances of staying in recovery.

Quitting these products will also save you a lot of money. A pack-a-day smoker will save hundreds of dollars a month and thousands of dollars a year.

**2 I have a counselor for my addictions. Should we be talking about my tobacco use too?**

Let your counselor know that you are concerned about your tobacco use. Ask about help to quit.

You can also talk with your healthcare provider or call the Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or toll-free 1-800-784-8669. Or visit [www.makesmokinghistory.org](http://www.makesmokinghistory.org).

**5 In addition to being in recovery, some of us have illnesses like diabetes, HIV/AIDS, or Hepatitis C. Isn't tobacco the least of our problems?**

Tobacco affects your heart, blood vessels, lungs, throat, stomach, and even your immune system. If you have an illness, using tobacco can make you sicker. For example, liver damage from hepatitis, problems from diabetes, and lung infections from HIV/AIDS are worse for tobacco users.

Quitting tobacco may also make the medicines you take work better and reduce side effects.

**6 Is there a Twelve Step program for people who use tobacco?**

Nicotine Anonymous (NIC-A) is a Twelve Step program that helps people lead tobacco-free lives. Meetings are held in person, over the phone, and online.

For more information and a list of meetings in Massachusetts, visit [www.nicotine-anonymous.org](http://www.nicotine-anonymous.org).

You may also want to check out Make Smoking History, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program at [www.makesmokinghistory.org](http://www.makesmokinghistory.org).

For free help to quit smoking:  
**1-800-QUIT-NOW** or  
toll-free 1-800-784-8669

**7 What about all the tobacco use that goes on at Twelve Step meetings? How can I stop using tobacco when everyone at the meeting uses it?**

Most Twelve Step meetings are now nonsmoking, and smokers go outside during breaks. During breaks, spend time with people who don't smoke or use e-cigarettes.

The same coping skills for staying in recovery can help you stay away from tobacco. Try talking to people, avoiding smoking areas, and remembering your reasons for quitting.

**8 It seems like everyone drinks coffee at meetings. I want to use tobacco when I drink coffee. What can I do?**

Caffeine can be a strong trigger when you are trying to stop using tobacco, so try to cut back or avoid it.

Caffeine in coffee, tea, soda, and energy drinks can also make nicotine withdrawal symptoms like mood swings, headaches, and sleep problems worse.

Bring a caffeine-free drink, like water or juice, to meetings instead.

**9 My doctor told me about Zyban® or Chantix® to help me quit tobacco. Isn't this using one drug in place of another? What about side effects?**

Using these medicines as directed by a doctor is not a substitution. Zyban®, also known as Wellbutrin® and bupropion, is an anti-depressant that is not addictive.

Chantix is also a non-addictive medicine to help you quit tobacco use. These medicines and nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), like the patch and gum, have been shown to help people quit tobacco.

All medicines can have side effects for some people. As with any medicine, you should stay in touch with your counselor and healthcare provider to report any problems — especially changes in your mood or behavior.

**10 Are the patch and gum safe?**

The patch, gum, and other forms of NRT use controlled doses of nicotine. NRT does not contain the toxic chemicals found in tobacco products or e-cigarette liquids, such as nitrosamines, arsenic, formaldehyde, and ammonia.

Make sure you use NRT exactly as the instructions say. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor to tell you how to use it.

**11 What happens if I quit tobacco and feel I want to drink, drug, or pick up a cigarette?**

Call your sponsor or a supportive person in your life. Stay close to your program. More AA or NA meetings — especially smoke free ones — will help.

If you're in recovery, you know more about quitting tobacco than you think. When you feel a craving for nicotine, you can use the same skills that help you to stay away from other drugs.

Just like cravings for other substances, cravings for tobacco will pass. Practice the Four Ds to help get through a craving: delay, deep breathing, drink water, and distract.

**12 Is there help available to quit tobacco?**

The Massachusetts Smokers' Helpline is a free telephone information and counseling service for people in Massachusetts. When you call, you can set up counseling sessions that fit your free time. Call **1-800-QUIT-NOW** or toll-free 1-800-784-8669. Or visit [www.makesmokinghistory.org](http://www.makesmokinghistory.org).

You can connect with an online support community for people quitting smoking at [www.becomeanex.org](http://www.becomeanex.org).

