



Slips and Relapses

A **slip** means that a person smoked after the quit date. It does not mean that that person has gone back to smoking full time.

A **relapse** is a person returning to smoking. Lots of people relapse but if a person sticks with his/her plan and tries again, they can quit for good.

WHAT can be done to prevent slips and avoid relapse?

A number of triggers will tempt individuals to return to smoking. Review your *My Action Plan for Coping With Smoking Triggers* Worksheet. For most ex-smokers, these triggers include:

- A crisis or some event that makes you feel stressed out
- Drinking alcohol
- Positive moods and relaxation that makes you want to “reward” yourself with a smoke
- Being around other people who are smoking
- Bargaining, such as telling yourself “It’s OK to just have one cigarette!” or “I really need a smoke to deal with the stress...I’ll quit later when the stress dies down!”

Use ALL the skills you learned in the previous classes to anticipate smoking triggers and plan for how to cope with them without smoking. As these triggers occur, and you do not smoke, the urges the triggers evoke will become weaker and go away over time.

Steps For Preventing A Smoking Slip From Turning Into A Smoking Relapse:

1. Do NOT beat yourself up by feeling guilty or feeling like a failure for smoking. These feelings will just make you want to smoke more.
2. Do NOT tell yourself negative messages, like:
“It’s no use, I can’t quit...I may as well give up because I smoked!”
“I smoked because I’m weak and don’t have the willpower.”
“I’m too old to quit smoking...it’s too late for me anyway.”
3. Do NOT put off quitting smoking again until later, when the stress or other reason for your lapse goes away. Stress is part of life; it will always be there in one form or another. Quitting again now, before your body gets used to nicotine again, will be easier than waiting until you’re fully addicted to nicotine later.

DO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION

1. Get rid of all other cigarettes in your home, car, and place of work.
2. View your smoking slip as a mistake, not a personal failing. Not all is lost because you slipped and smoked. A slip does not make you a regular smoker again...unless you allow it to. Your returning to smoking is not a matter of lacking willpower. It’s a matter of lacking preparation for coping with smoking trigger situations...a problem that can be fixed!
3. Learn from the smoking slip experience by identifying the smoking trigger and analyzing the problem that led to your return to smoking.
4. Commit yourself to use better skills for coping with the triggers that tempted you to return to smoking. Review your *My Action Plan for Coping With Smoking Triggers* Worksheet to select the best coping skills. Make a plan for coping with specific temptations and urges for the future.
5. Seek support in quitting smoking from the list of people recorded on your *Support System* Worksheet.