

IF YOU VAPE

A GUIDE TO
QUITTING SMOKING

BOOKLET 4

FOREVER
FREE

WHAT IF YOU HAVE A CIGARETTE?

*This is Booklet 4 in the **If You Vape** series. This booklet covers the effects of a “slip”– having a cigarette after you have quit. Although this is a short booklet, the topic is very important. Ex-smokers who start smoking again always start with a single cigarette. That first cigarette is an important one.*

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The answer to this question is “**No!**” After quitting, there may be a moment when you think “*I can have just one*”. You may think this after extreme stress, when you are with smokers, when you do not have your e-cigarette with you, or after some other high-risk situation.

“Nine out of ten people who have a cigarette after quitting, later return to regular smoking.”

Most ex-smokers cannot have “just one.” Research shows that if you have even **one** cigarette after quitting, there is a 90% chance that you will return to regular smoking! That’s right – for every 10 ex-smokers who have *just one*, 9 go back to regular smoking. It may not happen right away, but one cigarette can lead to another, and another. You may have heard that a recovering alcoholic should never drink alcohol. For ex-smokers, avoiding smoking is even more important than avoiding alcohol for alcoholics! This is because cigarettes are much more addicting than alcohol. Do everything you can to avoid having that first cigarette. When you are tempted, remember to use the behavioral (things you do) and mental (things you tell yourself) coping skills listed in Booklet 2, “*Smoking Urges*.”

You must do everything you can to avoid that first cigarette.

Be Prepared for a Slip, Just in Case

Many people who quit smoking slip and have a cigarette. But remember, of every 10 people who do that, 9 will return to regular smoking. Does that mean that if you slip, you have now failed quitting? We don’t think so. In fact, being **prepared** can help you beat the odds.

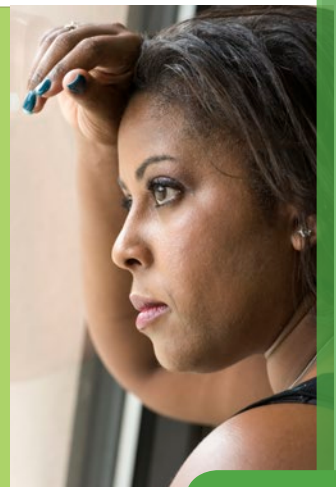
Being prepared for a slip is **not** the same as telling yourself it is okay to smoke. Being prepared is being smart and thinking ahead. Being prepared is having your coping skills ready to help you put down that cigarette. You also need your coping skills to stop you from lighting another.

Remember to always have your e-cigarette ready and available. This is another way you can prepare for a slip.

We compare preparing for a slip to preparing for a fire. If you have children, you may have talked to them about what to do in case of fire. They should know ways to get out. They should roll on the ground if their clothes catch on fire. And so on. But knowing what to do is half the story. Learning how to prevent them, like not playing with matches, is also important. The same is true for smoking. Having a cigarette after you have quit is like “playing with fire.” Think of your e-cigarette as a fire alarm or a fire extinguisher, both important tools to help you stay prepared and ready. **AVOID SMOKING AT ALL COSTS**, but know what to do just in case you slip.

Watch Out for the Effects of a Slip

Amy quit smoking nearly one year ago. She was feeling very good about being a non-smoker. She had been able to deal with the urges she felt soon after quitting. One evening when Amy was dining out, she forgot to bring her e-cigarette and took her friend’s offer of an after-dinner cigarette. She thought to herself, “What could it hurt? I know I have kicked my habit!” The next day Amy felt very guilty. She figured that she had blown all her work to quit smoking. “What’s the use? I’m a failure,” she told herself. She felt that she may as well pick up a pack of cigarettes on her way home from work as a way to cheer herself up.



Amy's story shows two things that could happen to people who have a cigarette after quitting. First, they think that all is lost and that there is no point in trying any longer. Like a dieter who eats one piece of pie and thinks, "My diet is blown; I may as well finish the whole pie." Thinking like that only gets you into deeper trouble. A whole pie is much worse than one slice, and a pack of cigarettes is much worse than one cigarette.

The second thing that happens is guilt. Ex-smokers who slip tend to "beat themselves up." This only makes them feel worse. These bad feelings may cause even greater urges to smoke, often leading to smoking again.

Saying "I blew it" after having just one is common. So are the feelings of guilt and blaming oneself. Because Amy felt that all was lost and that she was a failure, she went on to smoke more. She was soon smoking a pack a day. This happens to a lot of people after a slip. If you have slipped, the best thing to do is to take steps to get back on track. Use your coping skills and your e-cigarette to help avoid a full relapse.

The "I Blew It" Reaction

☹️ **Feeling that all is lost.**

☹️ **Feeling guilty.**

☹️ **Letting these feelings lead to more smoking.**

Keep a Slip from Turning into a Full Relapse



Michael stopped smoking about six weeks ago. His physical withdrawal symptoms were gone, but he still felt a strong craving for cigarettes when he was out with friends. Michael's friends did not vape, so he did not bring his e-cigarette when going out. One night when Michael was out with friends who smoke, he bought a pack of cigarettes.

The next day, he felt bad about his slip. Michael decided that he was not going to let it get him down. He threw away the cigarettes he bought the night before. He thought to himself, "The cigarettes I smoked last night are the last ones I am going to smoke. I have made it this far, I'm not going to give up now!" He felt relieved right away that he had renewed his commitment to staying quit. Next time he went to a bar with friends, he was aware that he might be tempted to smoke. He prepared for it by bringing his e-cigarette with him. Michael also brought some pieces of nicotine gum in case he did not want to vape in front of his friends. He told himself that if his smoking urges were too strong, he would leave.

Michael's story shows how a smoker can stop a slip from turning into a full relapse. Michael was able to throw the cigarettes away to stop his slip. He also used a mental coping strategy by telling himself that he was not going to smoke anymore. And he prepared by having his e-cigarette and stop-smoking medication (nicotine gum) with him if needed. Instead of seeing himself as a failure, Michael learned to prepare for the next time.

You too will be a lot better off if you see your slip as a way to learn about yourself. Beating yourself up for slipping does not help.

Sometimes the danger of the first slip sneaks up on you.



Dominick broke down and had a cigarette after quitting. To his surprise, the cigarette didn't taste good to him at all. Especially compared to the flavors he used in his e-cigarette. He put it out and felt sure that he would never have another. But, two weeks later he was tempted again. He told himself, "I controlled it last time without getting

hooked. I can control it again." So he had one. This happened four or five times over the next month before Dominick realized that he liked the cigarettes and the urges were coming more often.

This shows that every slip is harmful even if you have handled it before. Each cigarette makes it easier to have just one more.

It is important to commit to quitting again right away.

Linda had her first slip on Thanksgiving, about a month after she had quit smoking. She had just got into an accident and totaled her car. Linda had her e-cigarette with her, but knew it wouldn't be the same as a smoke, so she bummed a cigarette from the tow-truck driver. She later felt guilty and believed she had failed. She also knew that she still wanted to be a non-smoker. She decided that she would try to quit again after Christmas – over a month away. She slowly increased her smoking until she was back at her old rate of a pack per day. On New Year's Day she quit smoking once again. But, because she waited so long she had withdrawal symptoms again.



Linda did what many people do after slipping. She put off quitting again. As the days went by, Linda became less and less like an ex-smoker. And the longer she waited, the harder it became to quit again.

This happens because, with each cigarette, the smoking habit gets stronger and stronger. Quitting again after smoking one cigarette is much easier than after smoking a pack. And quitting again after one day of smoking is much easier than quitting after one week or one month of smoking.

Linda also chose a cigarette over her e-cigarette. This is common for dual users in stressful situations. Try to learn from your slip. What led to that urge for the first cigarette? In other words, what was the high-risk situation? Why did you choose a cigarette instead of an e-cigarette? In the future, are there better ways to cope with this urge? What coping skills should you use next time? Look back in Booklet 2 for ideas.



Activity

List examples that could make you reach for a cigarette instead of your e-cigarette:

List ways to prepare for and cope with these situations:



THE MAIN MESSAGE

If you slip and smoke, quit again as soon as possible.

In

Case

Tips are shown in the box below. Cut it out, fold it in half, and keep it in your wallet. Then, if you happen to slip, you can read it right away and take action.

CUT

You

Smoke...

1. **Get rid of any cigarettes. Make sure you have your e-cigarette and/or stop-smoking medications ready.**
2. **Think of that first cigarette as a “slip” rather than a “relapse.”**
3. **Do not feel bad and give up.**

THEN
FOLD

4. **Use behavioral and mental coping skills. (Leave the situation, call a friend, and/or vape.)**
5. **Commit to quitting again right away.**
6. **Learn from your slip. Be better prepared next time.**

Notes



The Most Important Messages

You should be proud for deciding to quit smoking and taking a step toward a better and longer life. Once again, congratulations!

The odds are stacked against you if you have a regular cigarette after quitting. So do what you can to avoid smoking. However, if you do have a cigarette...

1

Put it out and get rid of any cigarettes. Make sure your e-cigarette is with you from now on.

2

Think of that cigarette as a “slip” and not a “relapse.” It does not have to mean that all is lost.

3

Do not “beat yourself up.”

4

Use behavioral and mental coping strategies right away. Renew your commitment to quitting, leave the situation, call a friend.

5

Make that cigarette your last. Do not put off quitting again until tomorrow, next week, or next year. The sooner you commit yourself to quitting again, the easier it will be. Do not give your body time to readjust to being a smoker.

6

In addition to your e-cigarette, have stop-smoking products (for example, nicotine gum or lozenge) with you to control your cravings. You will need these with you if you have urges in places where you can't vape.

7

Learn from your slip. What led up to your smoking? Why did you smoke and not vape? Learn from your high-risk situation and prepare better for the next time.

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