



How to Help a Co-worker

tobacco
free

Second-hand smoke comes from the tip of a lit cigarette, pipe or cigar. It is also the smoke that a smoker exhales. It is what you see, smell and inhale when you're near a smoker.

For many people, quitting smoking is the most difficult thing they will ever do. Many tobacco users need seven to eight attempts before they are successful in overcoming their addictions. The workplace can be a place that supports this challenging process.

Ways Employers and Co-workers Can Help

- 1. Ask how you can help.** Make yourself available as much as possible, especially during the first few days. Keep in regular contact to offer support and encouragement.
- 2. Show concern** for them no matter what you think about their smoking.
- 3. Be patient.** Most people who quit smoking experience physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms usually peak within 48 hours, but might last as long as four weeks. Be especially understanding during this time.
- 4. Listen.** Don't preach, nag or use guilt trips; just listen. Hostility and irritability can be a normal – and temporary – part of the withdrawal process. Be sensitive to these moods and emotions and encourage them to talk about their feelings.
- 5. Encourage them to seek help.** Suggest they participate in smoking cessation activities at work or in the community and that they talk to their doctor for help. Encourage the use of self-help materials available at work or from community agencies such as the Canadian Cancer Society.
- 6. Help them avoid smoke and others who smoke as much as possible.** Invite them to join you in activities that are not associated with smoking, such as walking, swimming, or going to theatres, libraries and department stores.
- 7. Offer practical support.** Quitting can be very stressful. Offer to help minimize other pressures by helping with difficult work situations.
- 8. Keep a supply of smoking substitutes on hand.** People who quit smoking miss the satisfaction of handling and inhaling a cigarette. Keep a supply of gum, mints, toothpicks and straws on hand.
- 9. Be supportive if your friend has a relapse.** Sometimes it takes five or more attempts before a smoker quits for good. Encourage your friend to build on what he has learned and to try again. Let them know you believe they can do it and that they have your support whether they are able to quit now or later.



- 10. Celebrate success.** Help mark significant milestones such as three days, one week, or one month of being smoke-free. Send a note of congratulations, take them out to lunch, send flowers.
- 11. Reinforce the benefits of staying smoke-free.** Encourage your friend to use the money they have saved to purchase something special. Celebrate the health benefits by participating in a charity walk or run.

Source: Adapted from *the Program Training and Consultation Centre, the Alberta Tobacco Reduction Alliance* as cited in [Health Canada's Toward a Healthier Workplace: A Guidebook on Tobacco Control Policies](#).

