



FOREVER
FREE...for Baby and Me

A Guide To Remaining Smoke Free



Booklet 6: What If You Have a Cigarette?

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This is Booklet 6 in the Forever Free for Baby and Me series. This booklet covers the effects of a "slip" —having a cigarette after you have quit. While 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.

Can't I Have Just One Cigarette?

The answer to this question is "No!!" Sometimes ex-smokers try to tell themselves that they will be able to smoke only one cigarette without a problem. There are times when it can be very tempting to think of smoking "just one."

These times may include:

- ◆ when you are under a lot of stress
- ◆ when you are having a strong urge
- ◆ when you are with smokers
- ◆ when you are in any risky situation



For example, many women report that, when dealing with a fussy baby, they think of having a cigarette to cope with the stress.

"Nine out of ten ex-smokers 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 you will go back to regular smoking!! That's right—for every 10 ex-smokers who have a cigarette after quitting, 9 end up returning to regular smoking. It does not happen right away, but one cigarette leads to another and another. You may have heard that a recovering alcoholic should never drink alcohol. Nicotine is even more addictive than alcohol. Therefore, it is also true that an ex-smoker needs to avoid any smoking!

You must do everything you can to avoid having that first cigarette. When you are tempted to smoke, remember to use the coping skills listed in *Booklet 3: Smoking Urges*.

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

Be Prepared for a Slip

Some people are afraid to plan for a slip because they fear that they will use this plan as an excuse to have a cigarette. Some smoking cessation programs never teach their clients what to do if they slip. They fear that talking about it will make it more likely to happen. We believe that it would be a mistake for us not to talk about slips.

Most people who try to quit smoking end up having a cigarette. As stated on the previous page, most then return to regular smoking. We are not ready to label people as failures if they have a cigarette after quitting. We think it makes more sense to be **prepared**, just in case you have a cigarette.

Being prepared for a slip is **not** the same as telling yourself it is okay to smoke.

It is important to think about what you should do in case you slip. You need to have your coping skills ready to help you put down that cigarette. You also need your coping skills to prevent you from lighting another one.



In the first booklet, we compared 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 a fire. They should know ways to get out. They should roll on the ground if their clothes catch on fire, and so on. They should also know that a fire is very serious. Just because they know how to respond to a fire does not

mean that it's okay for them to play with matches. They still need to prevent fires at all costs. The same is true for smoking. Having a cigarette after you have quit is like "playing with fire." **AVOID SMOKING AT ALL COSTS**, but know what to do just in case you do have a cigarette.

Watch Out for a Slip

Arlene quit smoking nearly three years ago with her first pregnancy. 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 Arlene was eating out, she 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 Arlene felt very guilty. She figured she had ruined all her hard work to quit smoking. "What's the use? I'm a failure," she told herself. She felt she might as well pick up a pack of cigarettes on her way home from work as a way to cheer herself up.

Arlene's story shows two things that tend to happen when people have a cigarette after quitting. First, they think that all is lost and there is no point in trying any longer. This is like a dieter who has that first piece of pie and thinks, "I've blown my diet, so 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 after a slip is that smokers tend to feel guilty and bad. These guilty feelings may be even greater if you are a pregnant woman or new mom. Smokers tend to "beat themselves up." This makes them feel worse. This response is normal, but it does you no good. Remember that one of the big risk factors for slips is negative mood. Negative moods or feeling bad can lead to an even greater urge to smoke, which often leads to smoking again. It is a cycle that you want to stay out of. It is best to move past the guilt and **take action** to stop smoking.

The common reaction to having a cigarette is to say, "I blew it," and then give up and blame oneself. Because Arlene felt that all was lost, and she was a failure, she then went on to smoke more. Within a few weeks she was back to smoking a pack per day. This is a very common response to having a slip. If you cannot avoid the slip, the next best thing is to know when it happens. Then, instead of going back to smoking, you can take action to get back on track right away.

The "I Blew It" Reaction

1. **Feeling that all is lost.**
2. **Feeling guilty.**
3. **Letting these feelings lead to more smoking.**

Keep a Slip From Turning Into a Full Relapse

Michelle stopped smoking for her pregnancy. A few weeks after her delivery, her girlfriends wanted to take her for a "girls' night out." Her physical withdrawal symptoms were gone, but she still felt a strong craving for cigarettes when she was out with her friends. On this night, Michelle decided to buy a pack. The next day, she felt bad about her slip. Michelle decided she was not going to let it get her too down. She threw away the cigarettes she bought the night before. She thought to herself, "The cigarettes I smoked last night are the last ones I'm going to smoke. I've made it this far, I'm not going to give up now!" She felt relieved right away that she had renewed her commitment to staying quit. Next time she went out with friends, she was aware that she might be tempted to smoke. She prepared for it by bringing gum to chew. She also told herself if her smoking urges were too strong, she would leave.

Michelle's story shows how a smoker can stop a slip from turning into a full relapse. Michelle found that she was able to throw the cigarettes away and this helped her to get back on track. She also used a mental coping strategy by telling herself that she was not going to smoke anymore. Instead of seeing herself as a failure, Michelle learned to prepare for the next time.

You, too, will be 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.

Elena broke down and had a cigarette a couple of months after quitting. To her surprise, the cigarette didn't taste very good at all. She put it out and felt sure that she would not ever have another. But, two weeks later she was tempted again. She told herself, "I was able to control it last time without getting hooked. I'll be able to control it again." So she had another cigarette. This happened four or five times over the next month before Elena realized she liked the cigarettes and the urges were coming more often.

This shows that a slip can be harmful even if you think you have handled it at the time. 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. She had just totaled her car, and she got 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 nonsmoker. She decided she would try to quit again after the holidays. 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. And, as each day went by, Linda became less like an ex-smoker. The longer she waited before stopping again, the harder it was to quit. That is because the smoking habit—and the nicotine addiction—gets stronger and stronger. It is far easier to quit again after smoking one cigarette than it is after smoking a pack. And it is easier to quit after smoking for one day than it is after smoking for one week or one month. One new mom who quit smoking said: "*Don't quit quitting just because it didn't work the first time. When you were learning to walk, you didn't give up just because you fell down.*"

You should also try to learn from your slip. Think about the following questions:

1. Where were you when you got the urge to smoke? (*For example, Linda was stuck on the side of a busy highway.*)
2. What were you doing at the time of your slip? (*Linda was looking at her totaled car and dealing with a tow-truck driver.*)
3. Who were you with? (*Linda was with the tow-truck driver, who was a smoker.*)
4. What were you thinking about? (*Linda was worrying about how to get home and how much it would cost to fix her car.*)
5. How might you cope better with such an urge in the future? Look back in *Booklet 3: Smoking Urges*, for coping skills that you could use. (*Linda could have taken a few deep breaths and told herself that smoking was not an option and that smoking was not going to fix the problem.*)

**The Main Message:
If you smoke, quit again.**

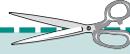
Summary

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



1. Put it out immediately and get rid of any cigarettes or other smoking materials (e.g., ashtrays, lighters).
2. Think of that cigarette as a "slip," and not a "relapse." It doesn't have to mean that all is lost.
3. Even though you may be upset with yourself, don't "beat yourself up." The guilt does not help you.
4. Use behavioral and mental coping strategies right away. Say aloud that you want to quit again. Commit to quitting smoking again. Leave the situation, call a friend for support, etc.
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, because your body will not yet have gotten used to nicotine.
6. Learn from your slip. What led up to your smoking? You now know this is a high-risk situation. Next time, you can be prepared.
7. Ask for help if you need it. Remember, support from your partner or friend can help you keep your goal of being a non-smoker.

Tips are shown in the box below. Cut it out and keep it in your purse or post on a mirror. Then, if you happen to slip, you can read it right away and take action.



In Case You Smoke...

- 1. Put out the cigarette now.**
- 2. Get rid of any other cigarettes.**
- 3. Think of that first cigarette as a "slip" rather than a relapse.**
- 4. Do not feel bad and give up.**
- 5. Use behavioral and mental coping skills(Leave the situation, call a friend, and/or list your reasons for quitting.)**
- 6. Commit to quitting again right away.**
- 7. Learn from your slip. Be better prepared next time.**



Notes:

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Enjoy Better Health for You and Your Baby

Stay Smoke-Free!

Development of this booklet was supported by grants from the:

- American Cancer Society (#PBR-94)
- National Cancer Institute (#CA-80706; #CA-94256)

Produced by the Tobacco Research and Intervention Program at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute at the University of South Florida. To order booklets, visit www.moffitt.org/foreverfree

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3/04-RL-6

