

Empire offers Fund participants a road map to quit tobacco

We all know that using tobacco is bad for one's health. This is true if you smoke cigarettes, e-cigarettes ("vaping"), or smokeless tobacco, like chew or dip. If you don't use tobacco, don't start. But if you do, you may need a reminder of how good life can be when you're tobacco-free. Empire's Tobacco Cessation Center can help with its Quitting Tobacco Road Map.

Reasons to quit tobacco

- Quitting helps improve your health immediately. Within hours of quitting smoking, your heart rate and blood pressure drop, and your blood's carbon monoxide level begins to return to normal. Along with those changes, your risk of cancer, heart attack, and stroke begins to decline.

- Avoid the many dangers of e-cigarettes and smokeless tobacco. While e-cigarettes contain fewer toxic chemicals than regular cigarettes, they produce an aerosol that can contain nicotine, lead, volatile organic compounds, and other substances that can cause cancer. Smokeless tobacco can also cause cancers of the mouth, pancreas and esophagus.
- When you quit you can breathe easier and have more energy.

- When you stop buying tobacco products you have more money to spend on things you enjoy. Tally up how much you spend on tobacco products each month. Then think of what you can do with that money instead.

- Once you quit tobacco products you will have sharper senses of taste and smell. You may be able to enjoy subtle flavors and aromas you missed while using tobacco.

- Quitting can help protect the health of others. Secondhand smoke from cigarettes can cause disease in nonsmokers while E-cigarette batteries can cause serious explosions and fires. Also, smokeless tobacco ingested by children can cause nicotine poisoning.

Tobacco Cessation Center

Empire's Quitting Tobacco Road Map, from their Tobacco Cessation Center, creates a personal "route" for your smoking cessation journey. Empire encourages you to think about the best route for your lifestyle, personality and health. Quitting cold turkey isn't your only choice. There are medicines, over-the-counter (OTC) aids, and therapies to help ease the pain and discomfort of withdrawal, as well as lessen cravings. Empire's program suggests

you discuss your options with your doctor, who can help you weigh the pros and cons of:

- Counseling and behavioral therapy
- OTC products, including nicotine patches, gum and lozenges.
- Prescription nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), including nasal sprays and inhalers.
- Prescription non-nicotine medications, such as bupropion (Zyban) and varenicline (Chantix).
- Going off all tobacco products completely, also known as "cold turkey."

Using some of these medicines can double your chances of quitting for good but may also present risks depending on any existing medical conditions you may have. Always consult your primary care physician before starting any new medication.

For more information on Empire's Tobacco Cessation Center visit www.empireblue.com, click on the "MyHealthDashboard" tab, then "Programs."

