

How to talk to your patients about smoking

A guide to beginning the conversation

Don't make them feel cornered

Begin the conversation with an indirect approach.

"Can you tell me about your smoking story?"

"So, I see you are a smoker. Can you tell me a little about why you smoke? Do you enjoy it?"

Be sympathetic

Quitting smoking is hard! Patients who smoke may feel responsible for their health condition, or feel that others blame them for smoking.

"I know it is very hard to quit and many people try to quit numerous times. It can be very stressful. Have you ever felt that?"

Meet them where they are at

Find out how ready they are to quit smoking. It's ok if they are not ready, every conversation about quitting smoking can be a step in the right direction.

"What motivates you to smoke?"

"What do you like about smoking? What do you not like about smoking?"

People who smoke are already aware that it is bad for their health. Just telling them to quit doesn't help!

As a healthcare provider, you can be your patient's ally and coach in their journey to smoking cessation.

Here are some tips and quotes to begin a positive, supportive conversation about your patient's smoking

Take their concerns about quitting seriously

Quitting tobacco can cause problems like increased stress levels and weight gain. These are major barriers to quitting and need to be addressed.

"What are you concerned would happen if you didn't smoke?"

"What are some bad experiences you've had when trying to quit?"

Find out what they've tried in the past

Your patient may have already tried smoking cessation medications and therapies, and not found them effective. However, they may not have been using medications and therapies to their best advantage.

"What have you tried that hasn't worked?"

"What did you like or not like about it?"

"How were you using it?"

Reinforce their personal reasons to quit

The strongest motivator might not be their own health! Identify their motivations and show your support.

"What would be your #1 reason to quit?"

"What are some other reasons you would want to quit?"

"What about the cost of smoking, is it getting less expensive?"

Focus on short-term quit goals

The first month is the hardest. If your patient shows interest in making another quit attempt, discuss some resources to support the process.

"Call the UAMS Smoking Support Phone Line 501-526-5448"

"You can receive free counseling and nicotine-replacement therapy through Be Well Arkansas 833-283-WELL"

"Is there a friend or relative that will help support your quit attempt?"

"Have you tried using a smartphone app to keep you on track?"

"Can you practice quitting by cutting back and using some gum or healthy snack in place of a cigarette?"

American Lung Cancer quit line 1-800-LUNGUSA