# Stopping smoking and mental health

Although the physical benefits of stopping smoking are clear, kicking the habit can also help to improve your mental health. Stopping smoking can improve mood and help relieve stress, anxiety and depression.

## Smoking, anxiety and mood

Most smokers say they want to stop, but some continue because smoking seems to relieve [stress](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/understanding-stress/) and [anxiety](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/understanding-panic/). It is a common belief that smoking helps you to relax but, in fact, smoking actually increases anxiety and tension. Smokers are also more likely than non-smokers to develop [depression](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression/) over time.

## Why it feels like smoking helps us relax

Smoking cigarettes interferes with certain chemicals in the brain. When smokers haven't had a cigarette for a while, the craving for nicotine makes them feel irritable and anxious. These feelings can be temporarily relieved when they light up a cigarette. This is why smokers associate the improved mood with smoking. In fact, it's the effects of smoking itself that are likely to have caused the anxiety in the first place. Using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)/E-cigarettes can help with this as the body gets the nicotine it craves without the toxic chemicals that are found in cigarettes.

## Dealing with stress

There are plenty of other ways to tackle stress that actually do work. You could try:

* going outside
* taking some deep breaths
* counting to 10
* going for a walk
* having a relaxing bath
* phoning a friend
* listening to a relaxing CD
* doing something physical/doing some exercise

You can add some more to this list—what do you think would work for you?

## Ready to quit?

You are three times more likely to quit for good with the help of a trained stop smoking advisor. Find your local stop smoking advisor by visiting the West Sussex Wellbeing website: [www.westsussexwellbeing.org.uk/smokingservices](http://www.westsussexwellbeing.org.uk/smokingservices)