

Guide Your Patients to a Life Free of Tobacco Addiction

Helping your patients with their pursuit of a tobacco-free life takes only a few minutes. This table will help you ask the right questions along the way.

Stages:	Steps:				
Precontemplation: Not yet thinking about quitting	Record patient progress in chart.	Ask , “How do you feel about your tobacco use?”	Show that you understand patients’ feelings.	Encourage patients to consider positives and negatives of tobacco use.	Offer information.
Contemplation: Thinking about quitting within 6 months	Record patient progress in chart.	Ask , “What do you see as the pros and cons of tobacco use?”	Reinforce patients’ reasons for wanting to quit.	Help patients identify more reasons for wanting to stop.	Provide information.
Preparation: Planning to stop using tobacco next month	Record patient progress in chart.	Reinforce , “You’ve made an important decision.”	Ask questions to determine nicotine dependence.	Ask , “Have you decided what day you will stop?”	Offer a longer visit to discuss plan (esp. if drug therapy recommended) and provide information.
Action and Maintenance: Has stopped using tobacco	Record patient progress in chart.	Ask , “How are things going? Have you had temptations or slips?”	Normalize difficulties, encourage and provide specific suggestions for each patient.	Ask about drug therapy (if relevant).	Offer follow-up visits or referral and containing support and provide information.
Regression: Has reverted to using tobacco regularly once again	Record patient progress in chart.	Ask , “How do you feel about quitting?” If discouraged, acknowledge feelings.	Advise that people often attempt to stop several times and learn from their previous experiences.	Offer to help when patient is ready.	



Keys to Effective Communication

1. Ask open-ended question: “How are you feeling about using tobacco now?”
2. Convey understanding: “You seem concerned about the impact of your tobacco use on your daughter.”
3. Acknowledge/affirm attempts to quit: “It has been stressful, but you haven’t used tobacco in two weeks. That’s a major accomplishment.”
4. Summarize the key issues: “On the one hand, tobacco helps you cope with stress; on the other, you are worried about your health.”
5. Encourage patients to focus on reasons to quit: “What is the most important reason you have for wanting to stop using tobacco?”