



Reduction and abrupt cessation equally effective for smokers wanting to quit

Clinical question

How successful is reducing smoking compared with abrupt cessation for smokers wanting to quit?

Bottom line

Reducing cigarettes smoked before quit day and quitting abruptly, with no prior reduction, produced comparable quit rates. This was true whether nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) was used as part of the intervention or not, and whether participants were offered self-help materials or behavioural support. Patients can therefore be given the choice to quit using either of these ways.

Caveat

The review was unable to draw conclusions about the difference in adverse events between interventions. However, recent studies suggest pre-quit NRT does not increase adverse events.

Context

Tobacco use is the largest preventable cause of death in the world, and is a risk factor for 6 of the 8 leading causes of death. The standard way to stop smoking is to quit abruptly on a designated quit day. Most smokers who try to quit using this method end up relapsing. There is evidence to suggest reducing smoking before quitting would be popular with smokers.

Cochrane Systematic Review

Lindson N et al. Reduction versus abrupt cessation in smokers who want to quit. *Cochrane Reviews* 2010, Issue 3. Article No. CD008033. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD008033.pub2.
This review contains 10 studies involving 3760 participants.

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