

# Don't Let a Relapse Sabotage Your New's Year's Resolution

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## Planning, Commitment Key to Success for Common New Year's Resolutions

As the old saying goes, "It is easy to quit smoking-I've done it hundreds of times." The difficult task is not quitting tobacco; it is sticking with the program. The same applies for dieting.

"One of the biggest reasons people relapse in their tobacco cessation or weight management efforts is because they attempt to change without a plan," said National Jewish Health Assistant Professor of Medicine Heather LaChance, PhD, an addiction expert. "Most people try to wing it, without a specific plan to cope with the inevitable ups and downs of dieting and quitting tobacco."

Dr. LaChance offers advice about planning and commitment, which can improve the changes that you will successfully shed those extra pounds or tobacco habit.

**Write down all the high-risk situations for relapse:** the people, events or places most likely to make you feel like overeating or smoking a cigarette. It could be your habit of lighting a cigarette when you first sit down to your desk or while driving in your car. Or it could be the birthday party at work or your favorite restaurant where they serve delicious, but fattening, nachos.

**Develop strategies in advance for dealing with those situations.** With tobacco, you have to find ways to avoid those situations, and if you can't avoid them then develop alternatives to the unhealthy behaviors, such as nicotine patches, toothpicks, or chewing gum. For dieters, it is important to know how you are going to handle high risk situations, either by having a healthy fat-free protein shake before you go out to eat or finding other techniques to reduce over eating.

**Write down the excuses you are likely to make just before you have a relapse.** "I have been so good, I deserve to splurge a little." "No one will know."

**Think of things you can tell yourself to counter those excuses,** something I call positive self-talk. "Smoking won't solve my money problems or depression." "I will feel so much better if I can stick with my diet. I can jump this hurdle." "My craving will pass if I can just hang in there for 10 minutes."

It takes more than planning, however, to successfully kick your old habits.

**Motivation** is an important element of changing your behavior. You can't succeed unless you are motivated to quit. But motivation is an emotional factor that inevitably waxes and wanes with the natural variations in your emotional state.

**You also need commitment.** Commitment is the conscious promise you make to yourself, and to others, that you will stick with your plan no matter what obstacles come up. On a bad day you may not be motivated to work out at the gym, but your commitment will get you there and through your workout. Remember, discipline is not something you do, it is something you have.

*National Jewish Health operates tobacco-cessation quitlines for five states: Colorado, Ohio, Idaho, New Mexico and Montana.*

*National Jewish Health also operates a weight management program, FitLogix.*

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## Media Contacts

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