

Making your home smokefree

Research suggests that having a ban on smoking in your home, so that smokers have to go outside to smoke, increases the chances of a successful quit attempt. The other benefit of having a smokefree home is that it will be cleaner and fresher, and that is something everybody can enjoy. Nevertheless, implementing a total ban can be difficult, depending on who has been allowed to smoke inside your home in the past.

There are a number of issues involved in enforcing bans with members of the household and with visitors.

HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS

It is important to get agreement from all household members about the following:

- where smoking should be banned
- when the ban starts
- how smokers will be reminded if they forget (i.e., ways of enforcing compliance with the ban).

Agreement on these issues will help avoid ugly disputes.

If only some members agree, there are a couple of alternatives open to you:

- try to get everyone to agree to a ban for a fixed period of time
- try to get a ban in some parts of the house or for certain periods of time, or both.

These are temporary measures, and you should include an agreement to review them after a period of say two weeks or a month. After a ban has been in place for this long, you may find that people are more accepting of it than they were initially, and may even agree to extend the ban further.

VISITORS

Getting visitors not to smoke is different. Some issues to think about here are:

- Do you or any of your family smoke at their place?
- Are you prepared to ask them not to smoke at your place? And, even if you are:
- Are you prepared to threaten your relationship by enforcing a ban?

If you expect visitors not to smoke at your house, you need to have stopped smoking at theirs (if you visit), or negotiate for different rules at different places.

You need to take the initiative. This is best done by offering not to smoke while at their place and explaining why. If they still encourage you to smoke inside at their place, then that is their decision. Ask something like "So I can smoke in your house, but you won't mind if we both go outside to smoke when we're at my place, is that right?" If you have quit, tell them that you will accompany them outside at your place, so they don't feel uncomfortable about visiting.

If a visitor asks to smoke at your place, a good line is “We’ve decided not to smoke in the house, come out to the patio/backyard/etc and you can have one there”. If you join them this is unlikely to cause problems. It is a good idea to have visual no-smoking signs about and no ashtrays. You will find that most smokers pick up on these visual cues and simply go out or ask.

You need to decide what to do when a visitor who doesn’t take the hint, or when you can’t reasonably suggest going outside (e.g., it is raining or very cold, and/or you don’t want to go out).

In some cases it might be easier to let them smoke inside, but don’t join them. If they comment on you not smoking, shrug it off by saying something like “I’ve decided not to smoke inside any more, but I don’t want to force my views on my friends”. However, most people will respect your wishes and either go outside anyway, or decide not to smoke.

If you decide to confront the issue, you need to be prepared for an argument. It is not so important that is it worth losing a friend over. Sometimes relationships are too important to threaten, and we sometimes need to accept friends warts and all.