

Path to Quitting Tobacco: What Does Yours Look Like?



Everyone has their unique path to quitting tobacco. There are **6 stages** of change that show how ready you are to change a habit (something you do often), like using tobacco. With support and guidance, these steps can help you move from not considering quitting to being ready to quit for good!

The scenarios below show **Juan's** path to quitting tobacco use and can help you see where you are in your own journey! They also show how health center staff can support you.



Meet Juan, a 45-year-old agricultural worker who picks strawberries on the farm. He has been using tobacco since he was 16 years old and smokes a pack of cigarettes a day. Smoking helps him feel less stressed from working long hours and less lonely without his family. Juan met Carmen, a community health worker (CHW) that works at his local health center.

Stage of Change 1. Precontemplation

You do not feel the need to stop using tobacco.

Juan is not thinking about quitting. He does not see smoking as a problem and is not worried about how it affects his health.

Carmen: Hi Juan, did you know that tobacco can affect your health in many ways? Have you thought about quitting smoking?

Juan: No, I have been smoking for many years and nothing has happened to me. It relaxes me after working long hours on the farm and not being with my family.

Carmen: I understand you are stressed, but smoking can cause many health problems in the future. When you are ready, I encourage you to think about quitting. Here is a [brief flyer](#) that can help you understand how tobacco can make you sick. When you have time, please read it and we can talk more next week.



Stage of Change 2. Contemplation

You start thinking about quitting.

Juan is starting to realize that smoking can make him and those around him sick. He wonders what will happen if he stops and thinks about the benefits it could have on his health.



Juan: Hi Carmen, I read the flyer after we talked last week. I started to see how smoking is already affecting me and noticed I run out of breath easily during work on the farm. I know quitting would be better for my health, but I'm not sure if I'm ready to stop.

Carmen: Just thinking about quitting is a good start. You can write down a list of reasons why you should or should not quit to help you decide. I know one thing others have told me is that not smoking has saved them money. Here are some more stories of other agricultural workers who have quit successfully that might help you with your list.

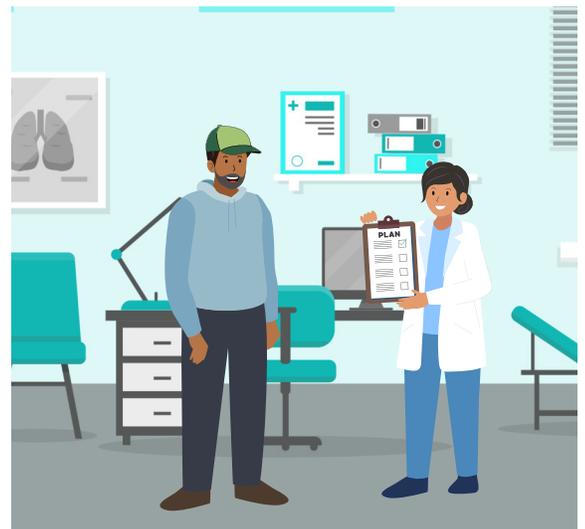
Stage of Change 3. Preparation

You are getting ready for change.

Juan has thought about it and is ready to quit using tobacco but is not sure what to do. He asks for support to help him get started.

Juan: Carmen, I want to quit smoking, but I don't know where to start. What should I do? I'm worried I will want to smoke, especially when I'm out in the fields.

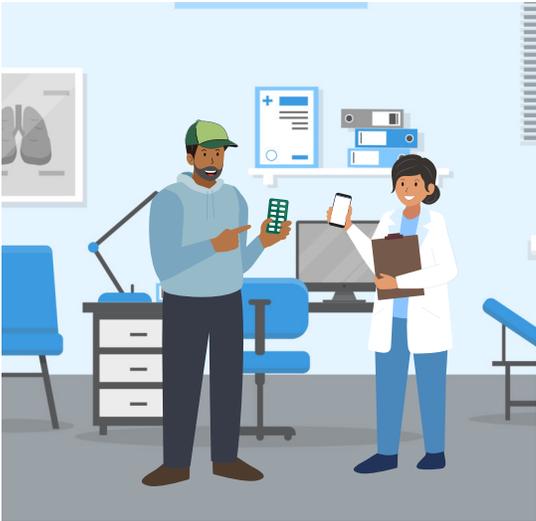
Carmen: Let's start by making a plan. First, we can pick a day for you to quit smoking. Then you can work on smoking less than a pack each day and try something else like chewing gum instead. Here are more resources and the contact for a support group, where people meet to encourage each other in their journey. Remember, I am here to support and check in with you. You got this!



Stage of Change 4. Action

You are taking steps to quit tobacco.

Juan is making small changes and is only smoking 3-5 cigarettes a day instead of a pack daily. He plans to throw away the rest of his tobacco by his quit date. Juan has also started using nicotine replacements like gum and patches to help his cravings during his breaks at the farm. He even has a friend that has offered to help him and joined his soccer team to relieve stress after work.



Juan: Carmen, it has been very hard for me to see others smoking during our breaks on the farm, but the nicotine gum you told me about helps with my cravings. My friend Mario also helps distract me. We talk about our favorite soccer team and games we watched.

Carmen: Juan, I'm proud of your hard work and what you are feeling is normal in this process. I'm glad the nicotine gum is helping you. During your breaks, you can also try taking short walks and take time to breathe deeply to fight your cravings. You can also call the CDC helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) if you need to talk to someone. Remember, take it one day at a time.

Stage of Change 5. Maintenance

You keep doing things to stay tobacco free.

Juan has not smoked for six months! He is working hard to stay tobacco-free and find ways to keep it that way.

Juan: I feel so much better, Carmen. When I am working on the farm, I am not as tired and out of breath as before. I also feel like I'm getting more exercise by playing soccer and being with my new friends. But to be honest, sometimes, I still miss smoking.

Carmen: That is great, Juan! You are doing it! I can see how much better your health is. When you think about smoking again, take deep breaths, and remember how good you feel now. It is normal to still have thoughts that tempt you, but they will happen less over time. Remember that your health is worth the change you have made. Keep using all the resources and the support group you have built!



Stage of Change 6. Termination

You completely stop using tobacco.

Juan has been tobacco-free for a year and has made many healthy and positive changes in his life. He feels confident he can stay tobacco free!



Juan: Carmen, I finally feel like I don't need to smoke at all anymore and I'm so happy about it. I can be around people using tobacco and I don't even get tempted. I have even saved money to fix up our house and my family is happy to see me healthier!

Carmen: I am very proud of you, Juan. You have come a long way in your journey and your heart and lungs are healthier. Keep setting small goals, use the resources we have talked about, and ask for help if you ever need it. I encourage you to share your success story with your friends and coworkers on the farm who might want to quit too.

Juan worked through each stage of change on his journey to quit tobacco and you can too! What stage do you think you are in on your path to quitting tobacco?

**Precontemplation
Contemplation**

**Preparation
Action**

**Maintenance
Termination**

Resources

No matter which stage of change you find yourself in right now, there are resources to help in your journey:

- Find a [health center](#) near you and make an appointment.
- Visit [NCFH Call for Health/Una Voz Para La Salud](#) and call the helpline at 1 (800) 377-9968 or reach them through WhatsApp at 1 (737) 414-5121
- Visit [CDC Support Resources](#) and call or text their quit line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)
- Visit [SAMHSA's National Helpline](#) and call any time 24 hours/7 days a week at 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Here are some tips to help you keep moving forward as you try quitting tobacco:

- Quitting tobacco takes time and does not happen all at once. Experts say it may take about 8-10 times tries before a person finally quits for good. So don't give up! Be proud of yourself no matter what stage you are in and celebrate each time you move on to a new stage!
- You are not alone! Reach out to family, friends, people you work with, and your health care team for support. Sometimes you may slip or have a hard time, especially if things in your life change like losing a loved one, losing a job, or moving for work. If you do slip, it is okay. Remember to use the help and support available to get you back on track to being tobacco-free again.

You can do this. Si se puede!