



Smart phone apps: Smoking cessation

Intervention

Mobile phone-based applications (apps) designed to support quitting smoking through a range of interactions (particularly text messaging).

Smoking cessation apps provide behavioural support such as education, motivation and advice on how to quit successfully. These can be used either alone or in combination with pharmacological support and/or counselling.

Indication

Most smokers want to quit.
Half of all smokers will have
tried to quit in the last year.

Patients of any age who want to quit smoking.

Without support, less than 6% of people who have quit smoking will still be non-smokers six months later. Support programs can improve the chances of quitting.

People receiving support with mobile apps show a 67% higher chance of not smoking at six months after quitting than people receiving only general health messages on their phones, or standard (not mobile-based) pharmacological and behavioural interventions. That is, with mobile app support programs, 9.4% of quitters stay quit at six months, compared with 5.6% without that support, or smokers who receive this support are around 1.7 times more likely to cease smoking than smokers who did not receive the programs.

Availability

An increasing number of apps are being made available from government and non-government healthcare providers. Some are free; others are available for between \$2 and \$10.

The Australian Government's Quitline has two free apps:

- › [Quit Now: My QuitBuddy](#) for anyone wanting to quit.
- › [Quit for you – Quit for two](#) for women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy and want to quit smoking.



Description

Quit Now: My QuitBuddy provides helpful tips and distractions to overcome cravings, tracking systems to chart progress, and the facts needed to understand the impact that smoking has on health.

It is easily customised. App users:

- › have the option to 'Quit Now' or prepare to 'Quit Later'
- › *can* set their own goals and add the support level needed to achieve them
- › receive a daily message for the first 30 days
- › can nominate 'danger times' when My QuitBuddy sends a notification
- › receive a series of scheduled alerts (such as 'Congratulations, it's been two weeks!')
- › can view daily progress including how much money they have saved
- › can choose distractions when craving a cigarette
- › can be reminded why they decided to quit with a personalised slideshow
- › can read helpful messages from other people who are quitting and leave messages for others to read
- › can call the Quitline directly on 13 78 48 from the app
- › can 'Buddy up' by nominating friends or family who can be called in the tough times.

Tips and challenges

When attempting to quit, many smokers use only pharmacological support (if any), particularly nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) which is easily obtained over the counter at pharmacies. If they combine this with behavioural support, they can increase their chances of quitting. Mobile apps are an easily accessible and inexpensive form of behavioural support.

Grading

NHMRC Level I evidence.

References

R Whittaker, H McRobbie, C Bullen, A Rodgers, Gu Y. [Mobile phone-based interventions for smoking cessation](#). Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2016;4:CD006611. doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD006611.pub4.

Stead LF, Koilpillai P, Fanshawe TR, Lancaster T. [Combined pharmacotherapy and behavioural interventions for smoking cessation](#). Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2016;3:CD008286. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD008286.pub3.

Rigotti NA. [Strategies to help a smoker who is struggling to quit](#). JAMA 2012;308(15):1573–80.



Consumer resources

Quitline – [Quitting methods and what to expect](#)

Texting 2 Quit – [Using mobile phones to support people quit smoking](#)

Alternative apps:

- › The UK's NHS [Smokefree app](#)
- › US-based Healthline has published the [best quit smoking apps of 2016](#). Another US-based organisation Smokefree.gov has an app ([quitSTART](#)) made for teens who want to quit (adults can use it too).