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Hackensack
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Be a Quitter

Quitting vaping can be just as difficult as quitting traditional tobacco products. These tips from our expert can help.



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In 2014—just seven years after they entered the U.S. market—e-cigarettes or vapes became the most used tobacco product among teens and young adults. Initially vapes were marketed as safer than traditional cigarettes, but studies have shown that 99 percent of vapes contain nicotine, and some vaping products provide higher doses than traditional tobacco. Despite these risks, the number of young people vaping continues to grow—but so does the number who want to quit. Our expert **John Villa, D.O.**, pulmonologist at **Hackensack University Medical Center**, provides five tips to quit.

1 Motivate Yourself to Quit
“You need to be ready to quit,” says Dr. Villa. You need to want it for yourself. If you aren’t ready and committed, it’s not going to work.

2 Choose a Quit-by Date
Select a date by which you intend to stop vaping. “Hopefully this is within two weeks of deciding you are ready to quit,” says Dr. Villa. The key is to select a date that gives you time to prepare—but not too far out that you might change your mind or lose motivation.

3 Prepare Yourself to Quit
Once you’ve chosen your stop date, prepare a plan that will help you stay on track. “Initially, quitting is very hard, so it’s important to break all the connections and have a plan,” says Dr. Villa.

Your plan should:

- ▶ **Identify triggers.** List the specific people, places, activities and things that may make you feel like vaping. Devise ways to avoid these triggers.
- ▶ **Find alternatives.** Through this process you will experience cravings. These cravings will be temporary but can be intense. Create a list of alternate activities you can do when you experience a craving. This will distract you and help the craving pass more quickly.
- ▶ **Consider a nicotine replacement.** If your vaping product has nicotine in it, it may be beneficial to use a nicotine replacement. Talk with your doctor to see if nicotine replacement may be right for you and what product would work best.

4 Find Support to Help You Quit
When you are ready to quit, tell your friends and family of your plan. Your loved ones can be a huge asset to you on your journey to quit. For those people who are not supportive of your resolve, you may need to distance yourself to avoid triggers and difficult cravings.

Additionally, professional support is a powerful resource. “I strongly recommend working with a medical team. Counseling is key and can help you through the day-to-day issues you may face when trying to quit,” says Dr. Villa.

5 Find Ways to De-stress
Many people vape to manage stress. Finding alternate ways to destress, such as exercise and meditation, can increase your rate of success. Quitting is hard and may take a few tries to achieve, but be kind to yourself and remember you are not alone. “Your team will always be there to help you every time you try to quit,” says Dr. Villa. 🌟

Go Online
Do you need help quitting smoking or vaping? Find resources to quit at [HMHforU.org/QuitSmoking](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/QuitSmoking).

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Scan the QR code to take our lung cancer risk assessment.



In October 2023, Mark Antonacci walked his daughter Stephanie down the aisle at her wedding at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City.

After he was diagnosed with lung cancer, Mark Antonacci is healthy and was able to enjoy his daughter’s wedding thanks to a successful clinical trial.

When Mark Antonacci, 63, developed a cough in 2020, he naturally suspected it was COVID-19. But after testing negative for the coronavirus and being treated unsuccessfully for pneumonia, Mark sought out the expertise of a pulmonary doctor who ordered a CT scan of his chest. The scan showed a suspicious mass, and a biopsy confirmed the diagnosis: advanced-stage small-cell lung cancer, a rare and fast-growing type of cancer.

Innovative Cancer Treatment
Mark and his wife, Jane, sprung into action to find the best care and treatment for him. “My doctor said I didn’t have much time, so we started going through the process of trying to get into hospitals and get insurance lined up.” Their efforts pointed them to **John Theurer Cancer Center at Hackensack University Medical Center**. There, Mark was given the option of being part of a promising new phase II clinical trial for his treatment. **Martin Gutierrez, M.D.**, a medical oncologist specializing in thoracic oncology and early drug development, was the principal investigator at John Theurer Cancer Center for this trial.

“The goal of the trial is to improve upon the results of the standard-care chemotherapy for

small-cell lung cancer,” says Dr. Gutierrez. “The trial includes chemotherapy, but it has two different drugs as maintenance therapy, as well. One is an immunotherapy, which manipulates the immune system to have better outcomes, and the second is a targeted therapy that attacks specific proteins.” Mark was one of three patients from John Theurer Cancer Center being treated as part of this global study. The study is now closed, and data is being collected and analyzed. “Every single drug has to go through a very detailed process of development,” says Dr. Gutierrez. “Part of that development is clinical trials to answer specific questions on specific diseases. If the results of the clinical trials are positive and show improved outcomes for patients, then the drug or treatment will eventually replace the standard-of-care therapy.”

Moving Ahead with Life
After Mark finished six rounds of chemotherapy, he spent the next two years going back to John Theurer Cancer Center once a month for maintenance therapy. Both the chemo and maintenance therapy meant being at the hospital for hours at a time, so Mark became good friends with the team there. “They all knew

my name, and they were friendly and fun. They deserve a standing ovation for how they took care of me,” he says. Even during his treatment, he kept working full-time, which for Mark—who manages an auto parts store and works at a local stadium when it’s open—can mean six or even seven days a week. “I kept my life moving ahead. I didn’t have any problems going to work other than the days I had to be at the hospital for chemo,” says Mark. Mark is now in remission and doing well, with no evidence of disease. In October 2023, he walked his daughter Stephanie down the aisle at her wedding at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City. “I made it to her wedding. I made it!” he says. “I’m so grateful that I got into the trial. It saved my life.”



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