What You Need to Know When Quitting Smoking
Nicotine Dependence: How Does It Affect Us?

Nicotine is the drug in tobacco that causes dependence. Nicotine dependence, also known as addiction, is the most common form of chemical dependency in the nation. Research has suggested that nicotine is equally as addictive as heroin, cocaine and alcohol.¹

Every smoker is dependent on a different combination of the chemicals in cigarettes, making their personal experience with smoking and nicotine dependence unique.

Every Time We Smoke

Every time we light up, nicotine and other chemicals from cigarette smoke are absorbed in the body. Nicotine enters the bloodstream and reaches the brain faster than drugs that are injected into the body through our veins. Nicotine affects many parts of the body; it changes how the body uses food (metabolism), it causes our heart to beat faster, increases our blood pressure, and causes our blood vessels to tighten, making blood flow throughout our body more difficult.²

Nicotine works by causing the release of certain chemical messengers (hormones and neurotransmitters) that affect different parts of our brain and body. One hormone that nicotine increases is epinephrine, also known as adrenaline. When nicotine is inhaled, the pleasurable feeling is the release of adrenaline, which stimulates the body, causes your blood pressure and heart rate to increase and makes you breathe harder. Nicotine also triggers your brain to release the hormone dopamine. When nicotine is inhaled, dopamine is released and causes the pleasurable feelings you experience when smoking, including relaxation and tension relief. Once inhaled, nicotine spreads throughout the brain within about 10 seconds.
The enjoyable feelings you experience from smoking happen very quickly, but after you smoke more regularly the effects of nicotine begin to weaken your ability to feel pleasure when smoking, causing you to need more nicotine in order to keep the good feelings. This is the cycle of the smoking habit; in order to continue feeling pleasure from smoking, you must smoke more cigarettes, more often.3-6

**When Smoking Becomes a Habit**

After the habit of smoking has started, we feel as though we need to smoke to feel “normal,” like our daily tasks cannot be completed until we have had our smoke. We begin to connect our smoking routines with many of our daily and social activities, creating triggers, making it hard to do those activities without smoking. An example is associating a cigarette with a cup of coffee or talking on the phone. We usually are not aware of the psychological effects of smoking. The triggers, the feelings of relaxation, stress reduction, focus, etc., become automatic. This is defined as psychological dependence.
What Happens If I Do Not Smoke?

When you do not smoke for a period of time, and no nicotine is entering the body, you may experience unpleasant physical and psychological side effects.

Some side effects include:
• Intense cravings for nicotine
• Anxiety
• Depression
• Weight gain
• Headaches
• Problems concentrating
• Drowsiness or trouble sleeping
• Feeling tense, restless or frustrated

These symptoms are the effect of withdrawal. Whether or not you have these side effects, or to what degree, depends on how long, how much and how often you have smoked, and vary from person to person. Symptoms of nicotine withdrawal can begin anywhere from 2 hours to 2-3 days after your last cigarette.
How Do I Reduce the Side Effects of Nicotine Withdrawal?

The physical side effects from nicotine withdrawal are a difficult part of the quitting process. To relieve these withdrawal symptoms, it helps to gradually lessen the amount of nicotine you absorb during the quitting process by using pharmacological aids. These are prescription or over-the-counter products that contain small amounts of nicotine to lessen withdrawal symptoms. Nicotine replacement therapies have also been shown to improve your chances of quitting by 50%. It is important to talk to your health-care provider about which nicotine replacement therapy may be right for you.

Here is a list of FDA approved nicotine replacement therapies for you to think about:

Over-the-Counter Options

- **Nicorette Gum:** Nicotine gum is helpful when you are experiencing cravings and it helps replace the hand-to-mouth motion of having a cigarette. Nicotine is released from chewing the gum and absorbed through your gums to reduce your cravings. The gum should not be used for longer than six months; if you have trouble stopping the gum, talk to your health-care provider.

- **Nicotine Lozenge:** Nicotine lozenges can be taken frequently to help you manage your cravings (no more than 20 lozenges a day). They are most effective when they are dissolved in your mouth; avoid chewing or swallowing the lozenges.

- **Nicotine Patch:** The patch provides a continuous low dose of nicotine that is absorbed through the skin. The patch is applied once a day and worn for 16-24 hours. It is available in three different doses; the dose you need depends on how much you smoke daily.

- **E-Cigarettes:** There is no evidence to support the use of e-cigarettes; however they are offered over-the-counter. We are following the use of e-cigarettes closely. You may visit our website for updated information.
Prescription Options

- **Varenicline (Chantix):** Chantix prevents nicotine from stimulating the brain and reduces the pleasure you receive when you smoke a cigarette. This helps to reduce your cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

- **Bupropion (Zyban):** Zyban is an anti-depressant that has been effective in helping some people quit by decreasing withdrawal symptoms. It has been shown to double your chance of success. This medication should be started one or two weeks before your quit date.

- **Nicotine Inhaler:** The nicotine inhaler is used like a cigarette; nicotine from the vapor is administered and absorbed through the mouth. The nicotine inhaler can be used throughout the day to help manage your cravings. This nicotine replacement therapy is also helpful in providing you the comfort you may have had with hand-to-mouth motion when smoking.

- **Nicotine Nasal Spray:** The nicotine nasal spray can help you manage your cravings. It can be used up to five times an hour but no more than 40 times in a day.\(^ 2,8,9\)

It is also important to note, that whether or not you choose to use nicotine replacement therapies, maintaining a healthy and balanced diet and drinking enough fluids are necessary to reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms and maintain optimal health.\(^ 2,6,10,11\)
Health Benefits of Quitting: Immediate And Long-term

Many people who quit smoking are surprised by how good they feel and how quickly they notice health benefits. Quitting smoking has immediate and long-term health benefits that improve your day-to-day life in many ways.

When you quit:

• You will not have to look for places and times to smoke, and you will not have to worry about exposing loved-ones to secondhand smoke. You will not have to make sure you always have cigarettes, no more late night runs to the corner store, and you will have more money.

• Your car, home, clothes, and hair will not have the lingering smell of smoke. Your skin and nails will look healthier; your teeth will be whiter and your breath fresher. You will have a better sense of smell and food tastes better! You will have more energy for everyday activities, like playing with your kids, and being physically active.

• You will lower your risk of developing cancer, stroke, heart attacks and heart disease, and other tobacco-related diseases.

• If you are pregnant, the immediate and long-term health benefits for your baby are huge.

• Your partner, friends, family, children, grandchildren and co-workers will be so proud of you. This boost of confidence can help you through the hard times!
Benefits your body experiences after quitting smoking:

• **20 minutes after quitting** — Heart rate and blood pressure return to normal.

• **12 hours after quitting** — Carbon monoxide levels in your blood return to normal.

• **2 weeks to 3 months after quitting** — Circulation improves and lung function increases.

• **1 to 9 months after quitting** — Coughing and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) start to regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs and reduce risk of infection.

• **1 year after quitting** — Risk of coronary heart disease is cut in half-compared to people who continue to smoke.

• **5 years after quitting** — Risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus and bladder is cut in half. Risk of cervical cancer falls to that of a non-smoker. Stroke risk decreases to that of a non-smoker after 2-5 years.

• **10 years after quitting** — Risk of dying from lung cancer is about half that of a person who is still smoking. The risk of cancer of the larynx (voice box) and pancreas also decreases.

• **15 years after quitting** — Risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker.
What You Should Know When Preparing To Quit

Quitting is hard, and making the decision to quit can sometimes be the hardest step. It usually takes 2-3 attempts, sometimes more, before finally being successful.

There are steps you can take to set yourself up for success.

1. Write down your reasons for quitting. Make a list and put a copy in your wallet, in your car, on your mirror or at work to remind you of why you wanted to quit in the first place.

2. If you decide to go back to smoking, you are not alone; nearly half of the people who quit go back to smoking within a year. We recommend that you use your experience with quitting; this improves your chances for success when you try again. Write down what was hard for you when you tried to quit before. What led to your relapse? Brainstorm ideas to help you avoid that in the future.

3. Developing a quit plan is one of the most important steps in quitting. It involves identifying your triggers and re-learning your habits without cigarettes, learning about what dependence is and how it works, and identifying a possible quitting aid with the help of your health-care provider.

4. Make an appointment with your provider. Counseling services and medication can help with quitting; research has shown that these resources can help double your chances of being successful!

5. Lastly, it is important to reach out for help. Talk with your family and friends, your “support system,” about your decision to quit.\textsuperscript{12,13}
What Are Your “Triggers” for Smoking?

An important part of the quitting process involves re-learning your daily habits without cigarettes. A trigger can be anything from a mood, feeling, place or setting, to daily tasks such as driving, cleaning or reading — any situation in which you would normally have a cigarette. After you have decided to quit, triggers can increase your feelings of needing, or wanting a cigarette. Your triggers are specific to you. Knowing your triggers can help you stay in control of your cravings. Finding one or many triggers is a great first step to understanding and gaining control of your smoking habits:

Do you smoke when you are?

- Feeling stressed
- Feeling down
- Talking on the phone
- Drinking alcohol
- Watching TV
- Driving
- Finishing a meal
- Playing cards
- Taking a work break
- Being with other smokers
- Drinking coffee
- Seeing someone else smoke
- Cooling off after a fight
- Feeling lonely
- Before or after intimate activity
- Experiencing boredom
Use the space below to fill in your triggers for smoking that may not be listed on the previous page:

• __________________________________________________________
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Stages Of Quitting

*The following are the stages of quitting that you may go through:*

**Denial and Acceptance**
Smokers often deny that smoking is a problem. Before you are thinking about quitting, it is difficult to accept that smoking is affecting your health. This difficulty with acceptance is called “denial.” Denial may continue until you have a negative personal experience related to smoking, including poor health, illness of loved ones or other related triggers that may influence you to quit. When this happens, it is common to realize the negative impact smoking may have on your life, and this often leads to acceptance and consideration of quitting smoking.

**Contemplation and Planning**
When you are ready to consider quitting, you now accept smoking as a problem and are motivated to make a change. Whether it is financially, physically or emotionally affecting your life, you are ready to take steps to develop a plan to quit. Your quit plan is one of the most important steps in the process of quitting. It involves finding your triggers and re-learning your habits without cigarettes; educating yourself about what smoking dependence is and how it works; and identifying a possible quitting aid. Lastly, it is important to reach out to your family and friends, your support system, and talk about your decision to quit.
Action, Maintenance and Relapse

The last three stages of quitting include action, maintenance and, sometimes, relapse. As you are carrying out your identified quit plan, you are in the action stage. You are no longer smoking and you have officially quit. The maintenance stage involves working to continue your quit plan while continuing not to smoke. You may begin to experience withdrawal symptoms during this stage, so managing withdrawal symptoms is one of the battles you may face during this time. Relapse, or starting to smoke again after trying to quit, is very common. Many people start smoking again to stop withdrawal symptoms that they are experiencing. This is why it is so important to be prepared and include ways to manage withdrawal symptoms as part of your quit plan. It is very common to cycle through the stages of quitting many times before succeeding with quitting. Quitting is not easy; there is no sugar coating it.
Ending The Cycle

There is no doubt that you will be tempted and have a strong desire to start smoking again during your path to quitting. We recommend that when you have a desire to smoke, you go back and think about why you decided to quit in the first place, including your personal reasons, and the health benefits of quitting.
Don’t Despair

You have worked so hard to get to where you are. If you relapse, you are not alone; nearly half of the people who quit smoking go back to it within a year. We recommend that you use your past experience in quitting, improving your chances for success when you begin again. Each time you try to quit, you can learn more about what helps you and what is difficult during the quitting process, and use that knowledge the next time you want to quit.
Who Can Help Quit: Resources for Quitting

Quitting is hard enough; do not try to do it alone. Along with the help of your friends and family, here are some community resources that you can reach out to for more support.

- Seattle & King County Public Health:
  http://www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/MHSA/Tobacco%20Treatment/Online%20Tobacco%20Resources.aspx

- Become an Ex-Smoker
  http://www.BecomeanEx.org/

- Smoke Free Women
  http://women.smokefree.gov/

- Smokefree.gov
  http://smokefree.gov

- American Cancer Society’s Quit for Life Program
  https://www.quitnow.net/Program/

- American Lung Association Freedom From Smoking Program
  http://www.ffsonline.org/

- Washington State Quit Line
  1-800-QUIT-NOW
  www.quitline.com

To learn more about nicotine addiction, smoking cessation and lung cancer screening, please visit us at www.swedish.org/LCSP
References


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The Tobacco Related Diseases & Lung Cancer Screening Program,
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www.swedish.org/quitsmoking