

Dealing With Withdrawal From Nicotine



Most people who are trying to stop smoking have some withdrawal symptoms but usually do not have ALL that are listed below. So use this information to help with the ones you have, and don't worry about those you are not experiencing.

Irritability/Anxiety

- ✓ The body's craving for nicotine causes irritability after stopping smoking.
- ✓ Irritability from stopping smoking will lessen over time (about 2 to 4 weeks).
- ✓ Try using nicotine gum or the nicotine patch to help lessen this symptom.
- ✓ Tell family and others in your life that this may be a tough time for you. Remember that this is a symptom of doing something good for yourself and it is temporary.

Craving a cigarette

- ✓ Cravings for a cigarette happens most often 2 to 3 days after stopping smoking but usually last only a minute or two.
- ✓ Cravings lessen over time. Most ex-smokers say they may have an occasional urge to smoke 2 or 3 weeks after they stop smoking.
- ✓ Distract yourself by doing something like going for a walk, reading, or watching television.

Coughing, Clearing the throat, Dry throat, Postnasal drip

- ✓ These happen because your body is no longer making "extra" mucous so mucous clears out of your airways soon after you stop smoking.
- ✓ This is also a way for your body to repair and return to health.
- ✓ These symptoms usually go away a few days after you stop smoking.
- ✓ Water, cough drops and hard candy may be help.

Wakefulness (Insomnia)

- ✓ This is caused because nicotine can effect how deeply you sleep and usually does not last longer than a week after you stop smoking. Dreaming about smoking is also common.
- ✓ Deep breathing, a hot bath before going to bed and drinking decaffeinated tea or warm milk may help.

Lightheadedness (Dizziness)

- ✓ Lightheadedness seems to happen because your body is getting normal amounts of oxygen, which was not the case when you were smoking. Your body is repairing and returning to health.
- ✓ This is common and usually lasts only day or two after you stop smoking.

(Over)

Concentration problems

- ✓ Your body is getting used to not having to rely on nicotine to help you concentrate. Most ex-smokers say that concentration is not a problem after a week or two.
- ✓ If you are facing a work deadline, a project that needs a lot of concentration, etc. you may want to think about timing your stop smoking date, and perhaps choose a weekend or vacation as the best time to stop.

Fatigue

- ✓ Nicotine is a stimulant, which speeds your body up and so this fatigue is caused by lack of nicotine. This is normal to feel after stopping smoking since you are not relying on a cigarette to “pep” yourself up. As your body gets used to the effects of stopping smoking your energy will increase.
- ✓ Fatigue often happens in the afternoon – 2pm to 4 pm.
- ✓ Healthy eating and avoiding sugary foods help with this symptom.
- ✓ Using nicotine gum or the nicotine patch will help lessen this symptom.

Hunger

- ✓ Sometimes cigarette cravings are confused for hunger.
- ✓ Try not to replace food for a cigarette. Instead use the 5 D's.



Depression

- ✓ It is common to feel depressed after stopping smoking. Some ex-smokers say stopping is like losing a friend.
- ✓ Try to rethink this as something positive, e.g. “I’m feeling this way because I’m getting rid of nicotine. Soon I’ll feel better.”
- ✓ Physical activity will also help. Many people find it helpful to be outdoors or go for a walk.
- ✓ These feelings will pass. Starting to smoke again is not the answer and will probably make things worse because of guilt you will feel about smoking again.

Constipation (Gastro-intestinal)

- ✓ Constipation may occur for a brief period after stopping smoking but usually not longer than a week or two.
- ✓ Eat more whole grains, fruits, and vegetables and drink more fluids.
- ✓ Physical activity will also help.

Chest Tightness

- ✓ Chest tightness is probably caused because the body is craving nicotine.
- ✓ This usually passes within a few days after stopping.
- ✓ If concerned, talk with your doctor or health care professional.

Remembering the 5 D's will help most withdrawal symptoms:

- Delay, Drink water, Do something else, Deep Breath, Discuss

New York State Smokers' Quitline
1-888-609-6292

www.nysmokefree.com