

New York State Smokers' Quitline

1-866-NY-QUITS

(1-866-697-8487)

www.nysmokefree.com

TTY: 1-800-280-1213

HOW TO:

DEAL WITH NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL



Most people who are trying to stop smoking have some withdrawal symptoms, but usually do NOT have all that are listed below. Use this information to help you with the symptoms you do have and don't worry about those that you do not experience. Remember that these symptoms are generally temporary in nature and a sign that you are on the road to recovery.

Irritability / Anxiety

- ▶ The body's craving for nicotine causes irritability after you stop smoking.
- ▶ Irritability from nicotine withdrawal will lessen over time, typically between 2 and 4 weeks.
- ▶ Using the nicotine patch or gum should help to ease the cravings and irritability.
- ▶ Tell your family and friends that this may be a tough time for you. Remind them, and yourself, that it is a temporary symptom and you are doing something great for yourself.

Craving a cigarette

- ▶ Cravings for cigarettes happen most often during the first few days after you stop smoking. These cravings usually only last a few minutes.
- ▶ Cravings lessen over time. Most ex-smokers say that they only have an occasional urge to smoke 2 to 3 weeks after they stop smoking.
- ▶ Distract yourself by doing something other than smoking. Walks, talking with a friend or reading a good book are some examples of doing something else.

Coughing / Clearing Your Throat / Dry Throat / Postnasal Drip

- ▶ Smokers' bodies create extra mucous to help rid the body of the harmful chemicals in cigarettes. When you stop smoking, your body stops making extra mucous. As you adjust to this change, you may need to cough or clear your throat.
- ▶ Coughing and other similar symptoms are signs that your body is healing itself.
- ▶ These symptoms usually go away a few days after you stop smoking.
- ▶ Drinking water or having hard candy is a way to ease the coughing.

Sleepless Nights (Insomnia)

- ▶ Nicotine can affect how deeply you sleep. When you stop smoking your body no longer has its "fix" of nicotine. This symptom usually goes away in a few days. Dreaming about smoking is also common.
- ▶ Deep breathing, a hot bath before going to bed and drinking decaffeinated tea or warm milk may help.

Lightheaded (Dizziness)

- ▶ Dizziness seems to happen because your body is getting normal amounts of oxygen, something that didn't happen when you were smoking. This is a sign that your body is repairing itself and returning to health.
- ▶ This is a common symptom and usually lasts only one or two days after stopping smoking.

- Continued on other side -

HOW TO DEAL WITH NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL

Concentration Problems

- ▶ As a smoker, you relied on nicotine to help you concentrate. Most ex-smokers say that their concentration returns to normal within one or two weeks after they stop smoking.
- ▶ Choosing a weekend or vacation are often good times to plan to stop smoking.

Feeling Tired

- ▶ Nicotine is a stimulant, which means that your body speeds up. Feeling tired is your body's reaction to not having the nicotine. Your energy will increase as you get used to the effects of not smoking.
- ▶ Tiredness typically happens in the afternoon. Try to plan activities that help keep your energy level high.
- ▶ Healthy eating and avoiding foods high in sugar can help reduce the effects of feeling tired.
- ▶ Using the nicotine patch or gum help can lessen this problem.

Hunger

- ▶ Sometimes cigarette cravings are confused with hunger.
- ▶ Try not to replace a cigarette with food. Use the 5 D's listed below instead.

Depression

- ▶ Some ex-smokers say that stopping smoking is like losing a friend. It is not uncommon to feel a bit depressed.
- ▶ Remind yourself that stopping smoking will have long-term positive effects and that the negative feelings and withdrawal symptoms will soon pass.
- ▶ Physical activity often helps reduce negative feelings.
- ▶ These feelings will pass. Remind yourself that the progress you have made so far is something to be proud about. Starting to smoke again often increases depression due to the guilt of having returned to smoking.
- ▶ Discuss your feelings with others.

Constipation

- ▶ Constipation may occur for a brief period after you stop smoking. It typically goes away within a week or two.
- ▶ Eat more whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Drink plenty of water.
- ▶ Physical activity often helps reduce constipation.

Chest Tightness

- ▶ Tightness in the chest is often caused by your body craving nicotine.
- ▶ This usually passes within a few days after you stop smoking.
- ▶ Speak with your physician or health care professional if you are concerned.

R E M E M B E R T H E 5 D ' S

Delay

Drink Water

Do Something Else

Deep Breathe

Discuss With A Friend