

Coping with Nicotine Withdrawal

If you're a smoker, quitting is one of the best things that you can do to improve your health. But quitting is easier said than done! If you've ever tried to quit before, odds are that you've tried to quit cold turkey and quickly realized the discomfort of nicotine withdrawal. Nicotine is a poison found in all cigarettes, chewing tobacco, pipe tobacco, and cigars made with dried tobacco leaves. Giving up smoking can seem difficult – and quitting cold turkey can be even more challenging. Most people who attempt to quit cold turkey will relapse and begin smoking again. Fortunately, there are many smoking cessation aids available that may help you kick the smoking habit for good.

The Challenge of Quitting “Cold Turkey”

Cold turkey is the most challenging method of quitting smoking. Because it can be difficult to cope with your body's reaction to nicotine withdrawal, quitting cold turkey is not recommended. If you decide to quit cold turkey (without the assistance of a smoking cessation aid), you may begin to experience withdrawal symptoms within two to three hours of your last cigarette. These symptoms are likely to get worse for several days and are typically at their worst three days following your last cigarette. After that, your body adjusts to not having a constant flow of nicotine and the withdrawal symptoms begin to subside.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

As you smoke, your body becomes addicted to nicotine and you become dependent upon it to feel normal. When you try to quit, you may face a number of nicotine withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms may include:



If you have smoked for a long period of time or are accustomed to smoking a large number of cigarettes in a day, you are more likely to experience nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

RESOURCES

American Cancer Society:

www.cancer.org

American Lung Association:

www.lung.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/tobacco

National Cancer Institute:

www.smokefree.gov

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QUITTING
COLD TURKEY
DON'T GO IT ALONE



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Managing Nicotine Withdrawal

On your journey to quit smoking, it is likely that you will encounter withdrawal symptoms along the way. This can be challenging, so it's important not to get frustrated and to remain focused on quitting. By staying focused, you can beat the effects of nicotine withdrawal. Consider the following tips for coping with nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Some medications which are available to help you quit smoking are referred to as nicotine replacement therapy. These medications contain small amounts of nicotine to help you to work through your withdrawal symptoms and gradually decrease your nicotine cravings. It's best to talk with your doctor before beginning nicotine replacement therapy because there is no single nicotine replacement method that is best for everyone.

Don't Go It Alone: Get the Support You Need!

Every state in the U.S. has at least one telephone quit line. For a list of options in your area, call **800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669)**.

Individual or group counseling can help you to learn new techniques and prepare to quit smoking. Nicotine Anonymous groups are available in many locations. Talk to your doctor or health care provider for a list of options in your area.



Proven Smoking Cessation Aids

Nicotine Patch

The nicotine patch is a small, self-adhesive patch which slowly releases a steady amount of nicotine into your body through your skin. A new nicotine patch is applied every day on an area of your skin between the waist and neck, such as the chest or upper arm. The nicotine patch is available without a prescription and is very easy to use.

The nicotine patch offers long-acting control for nicotine withdrawal symptoms and cravings for 24 hours at a time. The dose of nicotine is gradually lowered over the course of the therapy, allowing the cravings and symptoms of nicotine withdrawal to taper off over time. Most people will use the patch for about 8 to 12 weeks, but some may people may need to use it longer.



Nicotine Gum

Nicotine gum contains a small amount of nicotine which enters your body as it is absorbed through your mouth. Nicotine gum is a short-acting therapy, which means that it is effective in controlling sudden nicotine cravings for short periods of time, allowing you to manage cravings as they arise.

Nicotine gum may be used in combination with other smoking cessation aids, such as the patch and other medications. Nicotine gum may be used for up to 12 weeks. Begin the therapy with one piece of gum once every hour or two and gradually decrease the frequency of use as the withdrawal symptoms begin to subside.

Nicotine Lozenge

Nicotine lozenges are short-acting tablets which contain small amounts of nicotine. Lozenges are effective in reducing nicotine cravings for short periods of time. The lozenge is placed between the gum line and cheek, allowing nicotine to enter your bloodstream as it's absorbed through the lining of your mouth.

Nicotine lozenges may be used in combination with other nicotine replacement aids, such as the patch and other quit-smoking medications. Nicotine lozenges are recommended for about 12 weeks of use, allowing the user to gradually decrease their dependence on nicotine while managing withdrawal symptoms and cravings.

Tips to Help Cope with Nicotine Withdrawal

Get Up & Get Moving

By becoming more active and getting 30 minutes of exercise every day, you can improve your mood.

Sleep Well

Sleep allows your body to detox while you work through your withdrawal symptoms.

Reduce Stress

Meditation and deep-breathing techniques may help to calm you during your withdrawal.

Ask for Help

Having another person around to help you through the quitting process may provide the encouragement that you need to keep going.



Success is Within Reach!

The road to overcoming nicotine addiction is difficult, but with some focus and determination, success is within reach!

