

Possible Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms

Many people have withdrawal symptoms when they stop smoking or using tobacco. Symptoms tend to peak in the first few days, then decrease over the next few weeks. While these symptoms are unpleasant, they do not last for long. However, everyone is different and some people may have symptoms that last longer. Being aware of these symptoms and planning ahead can help you cope with them.

Craving: Cravings are an intense desire to smoke or use tobacco. They are usually strongest within the first week after quitting. Cravings can also develop when you are around activities or things that remind you of smoking, known as “triggers”. Triggers can include: other smokers, drinking coffee or taking a mid- morning break. Cravings decrease over time. However, some people may notice an urge to smoke or use tobacco months later or even years after quitting. When you get a craving; distract yourself, do something different, or call a friend.

Irritability: Withdrawal from nicotine can leave you feeling frustrated, grouchy and even angry within the first few weeks of quitting. Find things that can ease these feelings for you such as: going for a walk, doing things you enjoy, starting a new hobby, and finding ways to relax.

Anxiety: Nervousness or anxiety is a common symptom of withdrawal and can vary from day to day. Cutting back on caffeine and getting additional exercise can help ease anxiety.

Restlessness: Many people do not recognize restlessness as a symptom of withdrawal, but it is common. Go for a walk, reduce coffee intake or listen to music to create a sense of calm.

Difficulty Concentrating: The nicotine in tobacco has the effect of increasing your brain concentration and focus, so when you stop, many people have a period of difficulty with concentrating for a while. Getting plenty of rest and taking breaks during the day may help.

Insomnia or trouble sleeping. Nicotine can affect brain wave function and sleep patterns can be disrupted. Avoiding screen time before going to bed and getting regular exercise can help to improve sleep. Try cutting down on caffeine, especially before bedtime.

Hunger: One effect that nicotine has on the brain is to decrease hunger. Therefore, when you stop using tobacco, normal hunger signs return. A craving for tobacco can feel like hunger. Eating more will not necessarily help to satisfy that feeling. Have healthy snacks available and drink plenty of fluids.

Depression: There can be a feeling of sadness or feeling down after you quit. This is common. However, if this feels strong or unusual to you, please see your healthcare provider right away.

Other Possible Side Effects of Quitting Smoking

Cough: You may have some coughing or a dry throat and mouth. These are actually signs your body is healing. Coughing is a way to clear smoke, excess mucus and other chemicals from your airways.

Fatigue: Nicotine is a stimulant, so stopping smoking can make you feel tired initially. Getting enough sleep and even taking a nap may help during the first few weeks after you quit.

Gastro-intestinal symptoms: Nicotine can increase activity in the bowel, so when you stop smoking or using tobacco, it is possible that constipation can develop. Drink lots of water; increase your fruit and vegetable intake and get exercise to combat this effect.

Dizziness: While this is not a withdrawal symptom either, many people will complain of feeling dizzy. It is important to get plenty of sleep, drink lots of water and eat regular, healthy meals. Call your health provider if it continues. Use caution when driving or operating machinery.

Headaches: Headaches may be related to stress and changes in routines when you quit smoking. Take a break and give yourself time to relax. Deep breathing can be helpful for some headaches and general anxiety.