

Understanding Withdrawal Symptoms

Here are some symptoms of withdrawal from nicotine that may last a few days or weeks after quitting tobacco use with some suggestions on how to handle them. The peak of withdrawal symptoms usually takes place in the first few days after quitting but for some people they can last quite a bit longer. This can be uncomfortable but it is normal and they will fade.

You may feel	Why it may happen	What to do about it
Irritable, nervous, anxious, grouchy	Withdrawal from nicotine. Your body is used to having nicotine on board. It does not feel normal to not have nicotine. Your body will adjust!	Walk or exercise if you are medically cleared to do so. Call a friend. Try deep breathing. Get enough rest. Take a warm bath. Drink plenty of water and fruit juice. Ask your provider about taking NRT – or more NRT.
Lightheaded, dizzy, feeling over stimulated	This is common with withdrawal as your body adjusts. If you are using NRT, there is a small chance this could be from too much nicotine. Talk with your provider.	Be patient with yourself and take it easy if you can. Drink fluids get some rest. Accept that you will not be yourself for a few days. Be careful when using equipment or driving
Sleepy, weak, no energy	Also common with withdrawal. Your body is working hard to adjust. Eventually you will have more energy. Your body is recovering!	Leave extra time to accomplish tasks. Take naps. Drink fluids. Consider using NRT if you are not already using it.
Insomnia and other sleep problems	Your metabolism is changing. And recovery is hard work which can tire you out! Also, quitting smoking can change the way your body reacts to caffeine – making you more sensitive	Try to cut down or eliminate caffeine (remember caffeine is in tea, chocolate, soft drinks, etc. – not only coffee.) Try to get on a routine of when you go to bed and when you get up.
Hungry	Nicotine does suppress appetite. Your recovery also takes energy so you may need more fuel (food).	Try low-calorie snacks like carrot sticks and apples! Try popcorn without the butter. Drink water. Try to accept that you may gain a few pounds as you quit tobacco.
Increased coughing	This is a sign that your lungs are being cleared out. A good sign but it can feel uncomfortable	Drinking fluids really helps. Try avoiding dairy products that can create more mucous. Try sugarless cough drops. Do your best to avoid 2 nd hand smoke.
Constipated	Decreased intestinal activity as your body adjusts	Include fiber in your diet (fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains). Drink water. Daily exercise. Consider a gentle over-the-counter laxative
Headache	A common withdrawal symptom	Try to get plenty of rest; meditate; cold compress on your head; consider over-the-counter pain relievers.
Mouth sores	The chemistry of your mouth is changing now that you are not using any tobacco. It may seem that this is a result of use of nicotine gum or lozenge if you are using them – but this is rarely the case.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Topical medications applied directly on the sore, mouthwashes, and oral medications. 2. Try ice chips 3. Avoid acidic foods such as citrus fruits or spicy foods. 5. Brush teeth gently and use a brush with soft bristles. 6. Consult with your doctor if they persist or get worse
Perspiring	Body's way of flushing out impurities. Changes in metabolism	Drink more water. Wear lighter clothing.
Increased need to urinate	Could be from all the water we are encouraging you to drink! Also it is your body's way of flushing out impurities.	Take regular bathroom breaks.
Dry mouth, sore throat or gums	Your mouth is healing and needs more fluids	Sip ice water; fruit juice; sugarless gum



Thinking about quitting or ready to quit? Find help here.

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