

# Nicotine Cessation Tips

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**The Law of Addiction** - The **law of addiction**, states "administration of a drug to an addict will cause re-establishment of chemical dependence upon the addictive substance." Yes, just one powerful puff, dip or chew and you'll be faced with again enduring up to 72 hours of nicotine detox, by far the most challenging period of recovery. We are simply not that strong. Full adherence to the following simple restatement of the law of addiction provides a 100% guarantee of success to all: no nicotine just one day at a time ... "Never Take Another Puff, Dip or Chew."

**Be Honest With You** - Although the nicotine addict's dopamine high is alert, not drunk or numb, nicotine dependency is every bit as real and permanent as alcoholism or heroin addiction. An external chemical has caused the brain reward pathways -- the mind's priorities teacher -- to convince the deep inner mind that regular nicotine feedings are the #1 priority in life, more important than family, friends, eating, hostile weather, romance, health or life itself. Continuing use causes the brain to grow millions of extra nicotinic receptors in at least eleven different regions. Known as tolerance, the brain becomes hard-wired to function on ever so slowly increasing levels of nicotine intake. Why play games? Treating a true addiction as though some "nasty little habit" capable of manipulation, modification or control is a recipe for relapse. There is no such thing as "just one." Nicotine dependency recovery truly is an all or nothing proposition.

**Calm Your Deep Inner Mind** - The primitive subconscious mind (known as the lizard brain) may falsely see ending all nicotine use as though trying to starve yourself to death. It does not think, plan or plot against us but simply reacts to years of input from the brain's dopamine reward pathways, pathways long ago taken hostage by nicotine. The conscious thinking mind can be used to calm and reassure the compulsive lizard brain, especially in the fleeting seconds before dosing off into sleep, when the two draw near.

**Measuring Victory** - Forget about quitting "forever." Like attempting the seemingly impossible task of eating an entire cow or steer, it is the biggest psychological bite imaginable. Instead, adopt a more manageable "one steak at a time," or better yet "**one day at a time**," recovery philosophy for measuring victory. If we insist on seeing success only in terms of quitting forever then on which day will we celebrate? Who is coming to that party? Why not celebrate every day of healing and freedom.

## Recovery Phases -

(1) Physical nicotine withdrawal peaks by day three and within two weeks the body physically adapts to functioning without it. Known as nicotine's half-life, every two hours the amount remaining in the bloodstream is naturally reduced by half. All nicotine and 90% of the chemicals it breaks down into (metabolites) will have passed from the body within 72 hours of ending all use. During this period it is entirely normal to feel de-sensitized, as if part of you is being left behind. But your brain is working hard to restore natural neuro-chemical sensitivities. Be patient with your healing.

(2) You have trained your subconscious mind to expect the arrival of a new supply of nicotine upon encountering specific times, locations, activities, people or emotions. The process of reconditioning and breaking these subconscious triggers and cues also peaks during the first week, at about day three. All but remote, infrequent, holiday or seasonal nicotine use triggers are extinguished within a month.

(3) The final phase of recovery, conscious **thought fixation**, is the least intense yet longest. Here the rational, thinking mind will find itself fixating on conscious thoughts about wanting to use nicotine. Although at times nearly impossible to see and appreciate, with each passing day thoughts of wanting gradually grow fewer, shorter in duration and generally less intense. Within a few months they will become the exception, not the rule, as you gradually start to develop an expectation of going entire days without once "thinking" about wanting for nicotine.

**Withdrawal Symptoms** - As strange as it sounds, **withdrawal symptoms** are good not bad for they are true signs of healing of the brain, mind, and body. Within reason, it is fairly safe to blame most of what you'll feel during the first three days on quitting. But after that you need to listen closely to your body and if at all concerned get seen and evaluated. If you must, blame symptoms on where you have been, not where you are going.

**Possible Hidden Health Conditions** - Each puff of smoke contained more than 4,000 chemicals, while spit tobacco delivered up to 3,000. One or more of these chemicals may have been masking an underlying hidden health problem such as a thyroid condition (iodine) or breathing problems in smokers, including asthma (bronchodilators). Tobacco chemicals may also have been interacting with medications you were already taking and an adjustment may be necessary. Stay alert and get seen if at all concerned.

**Emotional Phases** – Chemical dependency upon nicotine was probably the most intense, repetitive, dependable yet destructive relationship you have ever known. It infects every aspect of life. Be prepared to experience a normal sense of **emotional loss**. Expect to travel through and experience six different emotional recovery phases: (1) denial, (2) anger, (3) bargaining, (4) depression, (5) acceptance, and (6) complacency.

**Quitting Methods** – Those standing to profit by selling quitting products paint cold turkey quitting as almost impossible with few succeeding. **Take your own poll**. What you will discover is that **nearly 90%** of all long-term ex-smokers and smokeless tobacco users quit cold turkey. Not only is it our most productive quitting method, it is fast and free. But quitting cold -- in ignorance and darkness -- can be frightening. When combined with education, skills development and ongoing support, no quitting product comes close. Not only do cold turkey quitters avoid potential **medication side effects**, they do not get **hooked on the cure** (nearly 40% of all nicotine gum users are chronic long-term users of at least 6 months). All pharmacology products share a common feature. They **delay brain neuronal resensitization** to varying degrees. What it means is that there is almost always some level of back-end re-adjustment, once they stop using the product, where they are left feeling temporarily de-sensitized.

**Record Your Motivations** - Once in the heat of battle, it is normal for the mind to quickly forget many of the reasons that motivated us to commence recovery. Imagine having a loving reminder letter listing all core motivations, carrying it with you, and making it your first line of defense - a motivational tool that can be pulled out during moments of challenge. As with achievement in almost all human endeavors, the wind beneath our recovery wings will not be strength or willpower but robust dreams and desires. Keep those dreams vibrant, on center-stage and calming the impulsive lizard brain and no circumstance will deprive you of glory.

**Do Not Skip Meals** - Nicotine was **our spoon**, with each puff, dip or chew releasing stored fats into the bloodstream. It allowed us to skip meals without experiencing wild blood-sugar swing symptoms such as an inability to concentrate (mind fog), the shakes, irritability or hunger related anxieties.

Recovery is a time when we relearn to properly fuel the body by spreading out our normal daily calorie intake more evenly. Eat small, healthy and often.

**Three Days of Natural Juices** - Unless diabetic, drink plenty of natural acidic fruit juice the first three days. Cranberry is excellent. Acidic juices will not only aid in more quickly removing the alkaloid nicotine but will help stabilize blood sugars and avoid needless symptoms. Take care beyond three days as juices can be rather fattening. If diabetic, talk to our doctor about a diet rich in foods low on the **glycemic index**, foods converted to glucose more slowly, that will leave you feeling fuller longer.

**Weight Gain** - We would need to gain at least 75 extra pounds in order to equal the health risks associated with smoking one pack-a-day. Consider vegetables and fruits instead of candies, chips and pastries to help avoid weight gain. Engage in some form of **moderate daily exercise** if at all concerned about weight gain. Keep in mind that those quitting smoking can expect a substantial increase in overall lung function within just 90 days of quitting. It will aid in engaging in extended periods of brisk physical activity, shedding pounds, and building cardiovascular endurance.

**Stress Related Anxieties** – Contrary to popular thinking, smoking or chewing nicotine **does not relieve stress** but only nicotine's own absence. Nicotine is an alkaloid and stress is an acid-producing event capable of quickly neutralizing the body's nicotine reserves. It is like pouring a liquid baking soda solution on an acid-covered car battery terminal, or watching someone waste money on yard care by applying fertilizer (acid) at the exact same time as limestone (an alkaloid). We actually added the onset of early withdrawal to every stressful event. New quitters often discover an amazing sense of calm during crisis. In handling stress during this temporary period of readjustment, practice slow, deep breathing while focusing your mind on your favorite object, place or person, to the exclusion of other thoughts.

**Quitting for Others** - We **cannot quit for others**. It must be our gift to us. Quitting for a child, spouse, parent, friend, the fetus, employer or doctor creates a natural sense of self-deprivation that is likely to ultimately result in relapse. If quitting for another person, how will an addict's junkie-mind respond the first time that person disappoints us?

**Attitude** - A positive can-do attitude is important to both the conscious thinking mind and the primitive lizard brain, which is in control of the body's fight or flight panic responses. Take pride in each hour of healing and each challenge overcome. Celebrate the full and complete victory each day of freedom and healing reflects. The next few minutes are all that matter and each is entirely do-able. Yes you can!

**Patience** - Years of satisfying low blood-serum nicotine levels conditioned us to be extremely impatient, at least when it came to our addiction. A deprived nicotine addict could inhale a puff of nicotine and have it arrive in the brain and release dopamine within 8 to 10 seconds, and oral nicotine users could feel it within minutes. Realize the importance of patience to successful recovery. Baby steps, just one hour, challenge and day at a time, and then celebrate.

**Keeping or Carrying Cigarettes, Dip or Chew** - **Get rid of all nicotine** delivery vehicles, including replacement nicotine products. Keeping a stash of nicotine makes as much sense as someone on suicide watch keeping a loaded gun handy just to prove they can. Why toy with failure or play mind-games with your ongoing healing and freedom? Build in some delay for those less than three minute crave episodes. Fully commit to going the distance and seeing what it is like to awaken to new expectations of a nicotine-free life.

**Caffeine/Nicotine Interaction** - Amazingly, nicotine somehow doubles the rate by which the body depletes caffeine. The caffeine user's blood-caffeine level will double to **203% of normal baseline** if no intake reduction is made when quitting. This interaction is not a problem for any caffeine user who can handle a doubling of their of normal caffeine intake without experiencing symptoms. But consider a modest caffeine intake reduction, of up to one-half, if troubled by additional anxieties, difficulty relaxing or trouble getting to sleep.

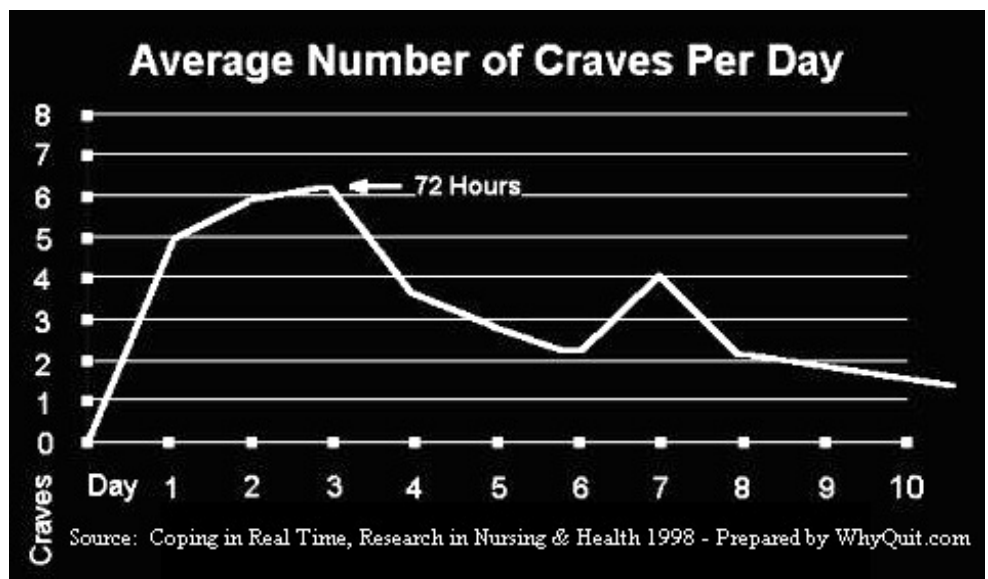
**Subconscious Trigger Extinguishment** - As mentioned, we conditioned our subconscious mind to expect nicotine replenishment when encountering certain locations, times, events, people or emotions. Be prepared for each such cue to trigger a brief crave episode as the subconscious mind sounds the body's fight or flight survival alarm. Remember, it is impossible for any trigger to cause relapse so long as nicotine does not enter the bloodstream. Take heart, most triggers are reconditioned and extinguished by a single encounter during which the subconscious mind fails to receive the expected result - nicotine. See each crave episode as an opportunity to receive a reward, the return of yet another aspect of life.

**Crave Episodes Less than Three Minutes** - In contrast to conscious thought fixation (the "nice juicy steak" type thinking that can last as long as you have the ability to maintain your focus), no subconsciously triggered crave episode will last longer than three minutes.

**Time Distortion Symptom** - Nicotine cessation causes significant **time distortion**. Although no crave episode will last longer than three minutes, to a quitter the minutes can feel like hours. Keep a clock or wristwatch handy to maintain honest perspective on time. It should be mentioned that it is possible to encounter two triggers at nearly the same time, or two in a row. But the experience is relatively rare, and is good not bad. You are fully capable of navigating up to 6 minutes of challenge, and at the end you stand to be double rewarded with the return of two aspects of life, not one.

### Crave Episode Frequency –

The "average" number of crave episodes (each less than three minutes) experienced by the "average" quitter on their most challenging day of recovery is six episodes on day three. That is a total of 18 minutes of challenge on your most challenging day. But what if you are not "average?" What if you established and must encounter twice as many nicotine-feeding cues as the "average" quitter? Can you handle up to 36 minutes of significant challenge during which the subconscious mind



Although no subconscious crave episode will last longer than 3 minutes, serious time distortion is very real when quitting so keep a clock handy.

rings an emotional anxiety alarm, in order to reclaim your mind, health and life? Absolutely! We all can. Be prepared for a small spike in crave episodes on day seven, as you celebrate your first full

week of freedom from nicotine. Yes, for most of us, nicotine use was part of every celebration. Also stay alert for subtle differences between crave-triggers. For example, the Sunday newspaper is much thicker and may have required three cigarettes to read instead of just one.

**Understanding the Big Crave** – The “average” quitter will be experiencing just 1.4 crave episodes per day within ten days. After that you may soon begin to experience entire days without encountering a single un-reconditioned subconscious trigger. If a later crave episode ever feels more intense, it is likely that it has been some time since your last significant challenge and you've dropped your guard and defenses a bit. It can feel as though you have been sucker-punched. If one does occur, see the distance between challenges as the wonderful sign of healing the incident reflects.

**Crave Coping Techniques** - One crave coping method is to practice slow deep breathing while briefly clearing your mind of all needless chatter by focusing on your favorite person, place or thing. Another popular three minute coping exercise is to say your ABCs while associating each letter with your favorite food, person or place. For example, the letter "A" is for grandmother's hot apple pie. "B" is for warm buttered biscuits. You may never reach the challenging letter "Q."

**Embracing Craves** - Another coping technique is to mentally reach out and embrace your craves. A crave cannot cut you, burn you, kill you, or make you bleed. Try to be brave just once. In your mind, wrap your arms around the crave's anxiety energy and then sense as it slowly fizzles while within your embrace. Yes, another trigger bites the dust and victory is once again yours, as you reclaim yet another aspect of life!

**Confront Your Crave Triggers** - Within two weeks, you should begin to realize that everything you once did while nicotine's slave can again be comfortably done without it, and often better. Meet, greet and defeat your triggers. Don't hide from them. You need not give up anything during recovery except nicotine.

**Alcohol Use** – Alcohol use is associated with nearly 50% of all relapses. Be extremely careful with early alcohol use during the first couple of weeks. Using an inhibition diminishing substance and then surrounding ourselves with people using nicotine, while still engaged in early withdrawal, is a recipe for defeat. Get your recovery legs under you first. If you do use alcohol, once ready to challenge your drinking triggers, consider breaking the challenge down into manageable trigger segments. Try drinking at home first without nicotine users around, go out with them but refrain from drinking, or consider spacing your drinks further apart, or drinking water or juice between drinks. Have an escape plan and a backup, and be fully prepared to use both. Also, should you be chemically dependent upon alcohol too, recent research suggest that the most effective recovery path is to engage in both nicotine and alcohol recovery at the same time.

**No Legitimate Excuse for Relapse** – Fully recognize that nicotine use cannot solve any crisis. Accept the fact that there is absolutely no legitimate excuse for relapse, including friction with others, a horrible day, boredom, significant stress, holidays, alcohol use, an auto accident, financial crisis, the end of a relationship, job loss, a terrorist attack, a hurricane, an earthquake, the birth of a baby, or the eventual inevitable death of those we love most. Try and visualize yourself not smoking or using oral nicotine products through each and every step needed to overcome the most difficult challenge your mind can possibly imagine. Yes you can!

**Conscious Thought Fixation** - Unlike a less than three-minute subconscious crave episode, we can consciously fixate on any thought of wanting to smoke, chew or suck nicotine for as long as we are

able to maintain focus and concentration. Do not try to run or hide from **rationalizations** of “wanting” but instead place each thought under honest light. Flavor? There are zero taste buds inside human lungs. Just one puff, dip or chew? For us nicotine addicts, one is too many and a thousand never enough. Treat nicotine dependency recovery as if it were no different than alcoholism. Do not debate with yourself about wanting “just one.” Instead, ask yourself how you would feel about going back to “all of them,” back to your old level of consumption or greater. Time for a reward? If it were to happen, your brain's pay-attention pathways would not allow you to forget the dopamine explosion that nicotine just caused inside your brain. Why reward yourself with total defeat? Like, love? Isn't that what drug addiction is all about, a chemical being elevated to being more important than life itself. Tear down your **wall of denial**.

**Reward Yourself** - Consider putting aside the money that you would have spent buying nicotine, and treat yourself to something you really want after a week, month or year. If a smoker, reward yourself by quickly climbing from that deep smoker's rut and spending more time in places where you could not smoke, engaging in activities lasting longer than an hour, and by ever so slightly pushing your normal limits of physical endurance in order to sample the amazing healing happening within. If an oral tobacco user, consider getting your teeth clean and no longer being afraid to laugh hard or smile.

**Fully Commit To Coming Home** - Why be afraid to tell others how good you are starting to feel about being free from nicotine's grip? Fully commit to your recovery while taking pride in each and every hour and day of healing and freedom from nicotine, in each challenge overcome, in each nicotine feeding trigger extinguished, and in each and every aspect of life reclaimed. Shed needless fears of success. Although your dependency long ago buried all memory of what being “home” was like, there is nothing bad about eventually going entire days without once wanting for nicotine. Ending chemical slavery is nothing to fear.

**Avoid All Crutches** - A **crutch** is any form of recovery reliance that is leaned upon so heavily that if quickly removed would likely result in loss of support and relapse. Leaning heavily upon someone commencing recovery at the same time as you can be dangerous. Although great to have them along, if looking to others for support, it is far wiser to pick an already recovered ex-smoker, ex-oral nicotine user, or never-user.

**The Smoking, Chewing or Dipping Dream** - Be prepared for the possibility of extremely vivid dreams as tobacco odors released by healing mouth tissues, or being swept up bronchial tubes by rapidly healing cilia, come in contact with healing and enhanced senses of smell and taste. See it as the wonderful sign of healing it reflects and nothing more. It has no profound meaning beyond healing.

**See Marketing as Bait** - Your recovery means thousands upon thousands in lost profits to the **nicotine addiction industry**. They do not want to lose you. See all nicotine product advertising and the hundreds of neatly aligned packs and cartons in stores for what they truly reflect – bait! Hidden within the pretty colored boxes, tins and pouches, and coated by more than **600 flavor additives**, is the chemical most dependency experts consider earth's **most captivating**.

**It's Never Too Late** - Regardless of how long we have been hooked, how old we are, or how badly we have damaged our body, it is never too late to arrest our dependency, become its master, and commence the most intense period of healing our body has ever known. Delivering at least 1/3 more cancer causing chemicals than oral tobacco (43 vs. 28), and hundreds of toxic gases, there is no debate but that the cigarette is by far the dirtiest and most deadly nicotine delivery device of all. But

the harms inflicted by even the cleanest nicotine delivery device should not be taken lightly. Not only does nicotine break down into one of the most potent cancer causing agents of all, **NNK**, it is a super toxin that, drop for drop, is more deadly than diamondback rattlesnake venom, arsenic, strychnine or cyanide. Just 2-3 drops of pure nicotine on the skin (**40 to 60mg**) is sufficient to kill a 160-pound human. The average smoker introduces 1mg of nicotine into the bloodstream with each cigarette, an amount sufficient to kill a one-pound rat. Is it any wonder that each nicotine fix eats away more of the **brain's gray matter**, or that nicotine is capable of damaging or destroying a **developing fetus**?

**Study Nicotine Users Closely** - They are not smoking, chewing or sucking nicotine to tease you. They do so because they must, in order to replenish a constantly falling blood-serum nicotine level that declines by half every two hours. Most nicotine is delivered into the bloodstream while on auto-pilot. What cue triggered the public feeding you are now witnessing? Watch acid-producing events such as stress or alcohol quickly neutralize their body's nicotine reserves. As you watch the smoker in the car beside you, you are witness to an endless mandatory cycle of replenishment.

**Thinking vs. Wanting** - There is a major distinction between thinking about using nicotine, and wanting to smoke, chew, dip. It is easy to confuse the two. After years of smoking cigarettes, chewing tobacco or dipping snuff or snus, you should fully expect to notice nicotine addicts (especially in movies), and keenly sense the smell of smoke. But it does not necessarily mean that you want to smoke, dip or chew yourself. At this very moment you are reading and "thinking" about the topic, yet probably not "wanting" or craving nicotine. Thinking about recovery is good, not bad, as it helps avoid complacency. As for thoughts of wanting, with each passing day they will gradually grow shorter in duration, generally less intense and a bit further apart. Eventually they will grow so infrequent that when one does arrive it may bring a smile to your face, as it may be the only reminder of the amazing journey you once made.

**Non-Smoker or Ex-Smoker, Non-user or Ex-User?- What should you call yourself?** Although it is normal to want to be a non-smoker or non-user there is a major distinction between a never-smoker and an ex-smoker, or never-user and ex-user. Think about it. Only the ex-smoker or ex-user can grow complacent, use nicotine and relapse.

**Complacency** - Complacency can destroy healing and glory. The **ingredients for relapse** are a failing memory of why we quit and of the early challenges, rewriting the law of addiction to exempt or exclude ourselves, and an excuse such as stress, celebration, illness, finances, war, death, or the birth of a baby. Use birthdays, your quitting date, and encounters with those still in bondage as opportunities to renew your commitment.

**Relapse** - There are only two good reasons to take a puff, chew or dip once free. You decide you want to go back to your old level of consumption until it either cripples or kills you, or you decide you really enjoy withdrawal and want to make it last forever. So long as neither of these options appeals to you, consider living an amazingly simple (notice I didn't say "easy") alternative - no nicotine just one day at a time ... Never Take Another Puff, Dip or Chew!

***Breathe deep, hug hard, live long!***



## ***About These Recovery Tips***

This tips list was compiled by **John R. Polito**, Nicotine Cessation Educator and Editor of WhyQuit.com, a free online nicotine dependency recovery forum, primarily using articles written by **Joel Spitzer**, WhyQuit's Director of Education (**www.WhyQuit.com/Joel/**) and research available online through the National Institutes of Health (**www.PubMed.gov**). These tips may be freely printed and shared by physicians, their patients and all attempting to break nicotine's grip upon their mind health and life. The below copyright seeks only to prevent any attempt to charge for copies of these tips or profit from them, directly or indirectly, by donation or otherwise. Last revised July 25, 2007 by **john@whyquit.com**

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