

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Pharmacological Crutches

Due to the recent release of Nicorette[®], a chewing gum containing nicotine, I feel it is necessary to issue a special warning to all clinic participants who may be considering experimenting with this product. The gum is intended to be used by smokers to ease the severity of symptoms encountered during initial smoking cessation.

But the ex-smoker occasionally desires a cigarette months and even years after quitting. He may feel that the urge is due to a physiological residual effect of withdrawal. This thought may lead to the idea that trying the gum may help get rid of the desire. But, the actual cause of the thought for a cigarette is due to a psychologically triggered response. Some situation, person or event is causing the thought for a cigarette. While these occasional triggers may be annoying, they pass in seconds and may not occur again for hours, days or even weeks.

If the ex-smoker tries the gum, the end result will be tragic. For once he takes the first piece, his addiction to nicotine will be re-established. Once again he will be in nicotine withdrawal. Then he will have to make a choice--either relapsing into full fledged smoking or once again encountering the two week nicotine withdrawal. All this because he wanted to ease a thought for a cigarette which would have only lasted seconds.

Even the intended use of nicotine gum presents certain problems. Many hope the gum will be a panacea for the truly addicted smoker. But caution must be given to the indiscriminate use by any smoker who feels that this new aid will help him break free from cigarettes. For while the gum may reduce the severity of initial withdrawal, it does so at a cost.

Normally, when a smoker quits, physical discomfort will peak within 72 hours and totally subside within two weeks. While the first three days may be traumatic, with proper support any smoker can successfully get through this period.

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Use of the gum may reduce the initial severity of withdrawal when quitting. The ex-smoker may continue chewing the gum for months, never reaching peak withdrawal. But because blood nicotine never reaches the levels maintained by cigarettes, nor totally leaves the body, he feels minor withdrawal symptoms on a chronic basis. When he finally quits using the gum, he will probably experience the same withdrawal he would have originally encountered when quitting cigarettes.

The gum may help an addicted smoker break some of the psychological dependence and conditioned responses before experiencing potential difficult withdrawal. But the cost for this easing of initial symptoms is a prolonged chronic withdrawal followed by peak symptoms when giving up the gum. This is a lot of long term discomfort which could be avoided by simply ridding the body of all nicotine by quitting cold turkey.

When you quit smoking, you broke free from the addiction to nicotine. As long as you keep all nicotine out of your body you will never again have to worry about the health consequences of smoking or deal with the withdrawal of quitting. If you wish to stay free, don't try the gum, and as for cigarettes, cigars or pipes - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

NOTE: This was originally published in 1984. Since then, a number or similar products, (e.g., patches, gums, other devices are currently under development), have been introduced as over the counter cessation aids. The same principal applies to them all - they are transferring the delivery system of the drug nicotine. If the smoker simply stops, withdrawal will peak and start to subside within 72 hours. Use of the agents will unnecessarily prolong the cessation process as well as add to the expense.

Joel

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