

Nicotine Cessation Tips

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. Adherence to this simple restatement of the law of addiction guarantees successful withdrawal and recovery for all: no nicotine just one day at a time ... "Never Take Another Puff, Dip or Chew."

Be Honest With You - Nicotine dependency is every bit as real and permanent as alcoholism. An external chemical has caused your brain reward pathways to teach your deep inner mind that regular nicotine feedings are your #1 priority in life, more important than family, friends, eating, hostile weather, your health or your life. Your brain has grown millions of extra nicotinic receptors in at least eleven different regions. It is wired to function on your current level of nicotine intake (tolerance). Why play games? Treating a true addiction as though it were some "nasty little habit" capable of manipulation, change or control is a recipe for relapse. There is no such thing as "just one." Recovery truly is an all or nothing proposition.

Calm Your Deep Inner Mind - The subconscious mind falsely sees ending all nicotine use as though attempting to starve ourselves to death. It does not think, plan or plot against us but simply reacts to the years of input it has received from the mind's priorities teacher, the brain's dopamine reward pathways, pathways long ago taken hostage by nicotine. Use your conscious thinking mind to calm and reassure the subconscious mind, especially in the fleeting seconds before dosing off into sleep. They are precious communication moments where the two draw near.

Measuring Victory - Forget about quitting "forever." Like attempting the seemingly impossible task of eating an entire cow or steer, it's the biggest psychological bite imaginable. Instead, work hard at adopting a more manageable "one steak at a time," or better yet "one day at a time," recovery philosophy for measuring victory. If you insist on seeing success only in terms of quitting forever then on which day will you 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 is substantially complete within 10 days to two weeks. Once you stop using all nicotine, the amount remaining in your bloodstream will be cut by half every two hours. Within 72 hours, 100% of nicotine and 90% of the chemicals nicotine breaks down into will have passed from your body. During this period it is normal to feel de-sensitized, as if there has been an emotional train wreck. But your brain is working hard to restore natural sensitivities. Be patient. **(2)** Subconscious smoking trigger/cue reconditioning normally peaks during the first week, also about day three. All but non-prison, remote, infrequent, holiday, seasonal smoking triggers are extinguished within a month. **(3)** The final phase of recovery, conscious thought fixation, is the least intense yet longest. Although at times nearly impossible to see and appreciate, with each passing day thoughts of wanting to use nicotine gradually grow fewer, shorter in duration and generally less intense. Within a few months they will become the exception not the rule, as you will gradually start to develop an expectation of going entire days without once "thinking" about wanting to use nicotine.

Withdrawal Symptoms - As strange as it sounds, withdrawal symptoms are good not bad for they are true signs of healing. 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 concerned get seen and evaluated. If you must, blame them on where you have been, not where you are going.

Possible Hidden Conditions - Each puff of smoke contained more than 500 different gases and 3,500 different particles. One or more of these 4,000 chemicals may have been masking an underlying hidden health problem such as a thyroid condition (iodine) or breathing problems including asthma (bronchodilators). Cigarette chemicals may also have been interacting with medications you were taking and an adjustment may be necessary. Stay alert and get seen if at all concerned.

Emotional Phases – Chemical dependency upon nicotine was likely the most intense, repetitive, dependable and destructive relationship you have ever known. It infected every aspect of life. Be prepared to experience a normal sense of emotional loss. Expect to travel through and experience six different emotional 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 quit smoking 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 and skills development, 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 re-sensitization 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 and vulnerable to relapse.

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. Write yourself a loving reminder letter, carry it with you, and make it your first line of defense - a motivational tool that you can pull out during moments of challenge. As with achievement in almost all human endeavors, the wind beneath your recovery wings will not be strength or willpower but robust dreams and desires. Keep those dreams vibrant, on center-stage and calming your primitive impulsive mind and no circumstance will deprive you of glory.

Do Not Skip Meals - Each puff of nicotine was our spoon, releasing stored fats into our bloodstream. It allowed us to skip meals without experiencing wild blood-sugar swing symptoms such as an inability to concentrate (mind fog) or hunger related anxieties. We must relearn to properly fuel our body by spreading out our normal daily calorie intake more evenly.

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. If at all concerned about weight gain engage in some form of moderate daily exercise. Keep in mind that you 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, in shedding pounds, and building cardiovascular endurance.

Stress Related Anxieties – Contrary to popular thinking, using nicotine does not relieve stress but only nicotine's own absence. Nicotine is an alkaloid. Stress is an acid-producing event capable of quickly neutralizing the body's nicotine reserves. We actually added early withdrawal to every stressful event. New quitters soon begin to notice an amazing sense of calm during crisis. In handling stress during this temporary period of readjustment called "quitting," practice slow deep breathing while focusing your mind

on your favorite object, place or person to the exclusion of other thoughts.

Quitting for Others - Amazingly, 97 out of 100 inmates released from tobacco-free prisons were found to have relapsed to smoking within 6 months of release. We can “stop” due to a prison policy banning tobacco but in order to stay free and avoid relapse our quit must be our gift to us, not others. Stopping for a child, spouse, parent, friend, doctor or policy creates a deprived feeling that gnaws at you and invites failure and relapse. Allow yourself the luxury of fully embracing the greatest period of healing your mind and body have likely ever known.

Attitude - A positive can-do attitude is important to both the conscious thinking mind and the impulsive mind, which controls of the body’s fight or flight panic responses. Take pride in each hour of healing and freedom, and in 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 smoking nicotine conditioned us to be extremely impatient, at least when it came to our addiction and that dopamine “aaah” sensation.. 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 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 a stash - It is normal to think in terms of wanting to keep a stash of tobacco but getting a nicotine fix every now and then will only prolong the three days needed to reach peak withdrawal, where you can begin gradually feeling better. In fact, withdrawal anxieties could not possibly be worse than if living in an endless state of peak withdrawal by using nicotine just once every three days.

Caffeine/Nicotine Interaction - Amazingly, nicotine somehow doubles the rate by which the body depletes caffeine. Studies have found that the caffeine user’s blood-caffeine level will rise 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 Nicotine Use Triggers - 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. Encountering a trigger cannot generate relapse unless nicotine enters the bloodstream. 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, to reclaim yet another aspect of life.

Non-Prison Triggers - Expect to experience crave episodes once released, when engaging in first time activities during which you used to smoke but that you couldn’t do in prison. For example, expect a crave episode when seeing your old smoking buddy for the first time, walking into a bar or following romance.

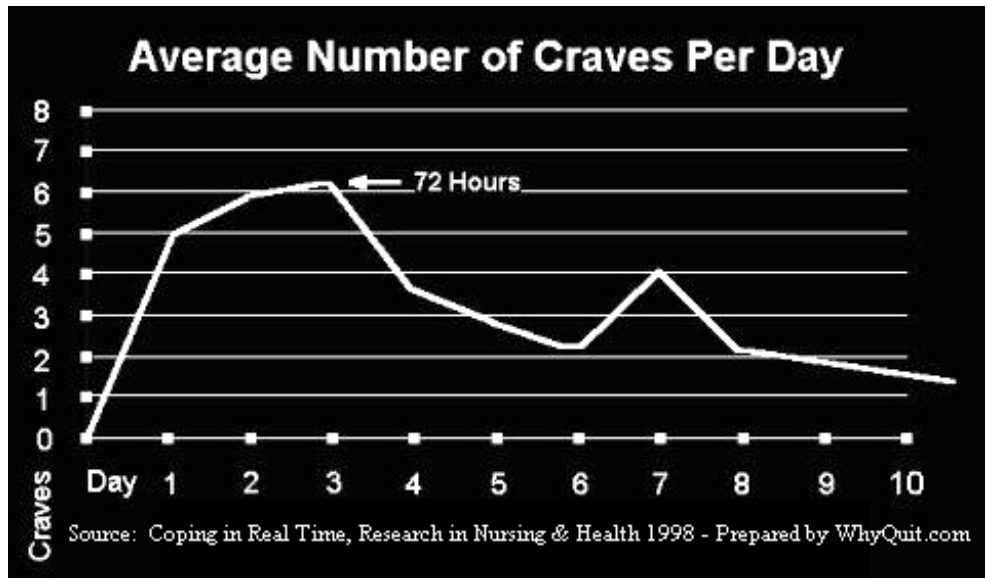
Crave Episodes Less than Three Minutes - In contrast to conscious thought fixation (the "nice juicy steak" type thinking that can last as long as you have the ability to maintain your focus), no subconsciously triggered crave episode will last longer than three minutes.

Time Distortion Symptom - Nicotine cessation causes serious 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

wrist watch handy to maintain an honest perspective on time.

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 meet, greet and defeat twice as many nicotine-feeding cues as the "average" quitter? That's up to 36 minutes of significant challenge. Can you handle up to 36 minutes, during which your primitive mind rings an 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 too. 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.



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

Crave Coping Techniques - One coping method is to practice slow deep breathing when experiencing a crave episode. Try briefly clearing your mind of all needless chatter by focusing on your favorite person, place or thing. Another popular three minute crave 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 grandma's hot apple pie. "B" is for warm buttered biscuits. I think you will find that you never reach the challenging letter "Q."

Embracing Craves - Another urge, crave or impulse coping technique is to mentally reach out and embrace your crave. 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 fizzes while within your embrace. Yes, another trigger bites the dust, and victory is once again yours, as you have reclaimed yet another aspect of life!

Confront Your Crave Triggers - Recognize the fact that everything you did as a nicotine user will soon be comfortably done as an ex-user. Meet, greet and defeat your triggers. Don't hide from them. You need not give up anything when quitting except nicotine. Within two weeks you will begin to realize that

everything you did while under nicotine's influence can be done as well or better without it.

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, and if released, alcohol use, an auto accident, a job search, financial crisis, the end of a relationship, job loss, a terrorist attack, a hurricane, an offer of a cigar at 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 our concentration. Don't 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 or heroin addiction. Don't debate with yourself about wanting "just one." Instead, ask yourself how you'd feel about going back to "all of them," back to your old level of consumption or greater. 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 unable to save, reward yourself by quickly climbing from that deep smoker's rut and engaging in activities lasting longer than an hour, or by ever so slightly pushing your normal limits of physical endurance in order to sample the amazing healing happening within.

Fully Commit To Staying Clean - You may have had your own long-held dream of some day quitting on your own terms. That dream didn't belong to some institution but was yours. Why not let that dream live now? 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, each smoking trigger extinguished and each aspect of life reclaimed. Shed all fears of success. Although you've forgotten what "home" is like, there is absolutely 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.

The Smoking Dream - Be prepared for 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 a healing and enhanced sense 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 smoking in movies and nicotine product advertising for what it truly reflects – 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 - nicotine.

It's Never Too Late - Regardless of how long you've been hooked, how old you are, or how badly you've damaged your body, it's never too late to arrest your dependency, become its master, and commence

the most intense period of healing your body has ever known. The destruction has stopped. Arrival of the super-toxin and powerful natural insecticide nicotine has ended. The average smoker brings 1mg of nicotine into their 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?

Study Nicotine Users Closely - You may see them in movies or if released. 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 one-half every two hours. Most nicotine is delivered into the bloodstream while on auto-pilot. What cue triggered the public feeding you're now witnessing? Watch acid-producing events such as stress or alcohol quickly neutralize their body's nicotine reserves. Witness their 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 you should expect to notice smokers (especially in movies) and smell their smoke but it doesn't necessarily mean that you want to smoke. As for thoughts of wanting, with each passing day they'll gradually grow shorter in duration, generally less intense and a bit further apart. Eventually they'll grow so infrequent that when one does arrive it will bring a smile to your face, as it will be a reminder of the amazing journey you once made.

Non-Smoker or Ex-Smoker - What should you call yourself? Although it is normal to want to be a non-smoker there is a major distinction between a never-smoker and an ex-smoker. Only the ex-smoker 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 the early challenges, rewriting the law of addiction to exempt or exclude ourselves, opportunity, and an excuse such a release, stress, celebration, illness, finances, war, death, or the birth of a baby.

Relapse - There are only two good reasons to take a puff, chew or dip once you quit. You decide you want to go back to your old level of consumption until it either cripples or kills you, or leaves you with so little remaining brain gray matter that remembering anything you just read becomes nearly impossible, or you decide you really enjoy nicotine 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!

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 and research available online through the National Institutes of Health (www.PubMed.gov). These tips may be freely printed and shared with all attempting to break nicotine's grip upon their mind health and life.

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