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After You Quit: Dealing With Smoking Withdrawal and More

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After You Quit: Dealing With Smoking Withdrawal and More

Withdrawal Worries – What Happens After You Quit Smoking

One of the problems many smokers have is dealing with the symptoms of withdrawal. This is partly because the symptoms are so strong, but is also largely because they are unexpected. For this reason, it is important for smokers who are trying to quit to be aware of the possible withdrawal symptoms ahead of time and to make plans for dealing with them.

Dizziness

Sometimes, you will experience dizziness when you quit smoking. This is because of the increase in oxygen in the blood combined with the blood pressure lowering back to normal. For this reason, it is important for you to be careful if trying to quit. Be aware of this possibility and don't work too hard. You can also try going for a walk, getting fresh air, or slowly changing positions. Dizziness often lasts for several days before going away.

Coughing, Runny Nose, and Sore Throat

No, this isn't a cold. When you quit smoking, your body's respiratory system attempts to clean itself out. This can result in excessive coughing and even a runny nose. It is best to drink lots of fluids at this time in order to help your body cleanse itself.

At the same time, you may get a sore throat. This is because your throat is clearing away the tar and nicotine and growing new tissues. Sucking on sweets or throat lozenges can help, as can eating honey.

Tightness in Chest, Flatulence, Constipation, and Headaches

Again, you aren't sick. This isn't the flu; these are withdrawal symptoms as your body attempts to recover from the nicotine, tar, and other toxins it endured from smoking. The tight chest is actually caused from all of the coughing you have been doing. Your chest muscles have become sore, so you need to do relaxation exercises and try some deep breathing to relax your chest muscles.

The movement in your intestines temporarily slowing down causes the flatulence and constipation. If you eat plenty of fiber and drink lots of fluids, you should see a little relief. The headaches are the result of an increased blood flow to your brain. In addition, this blood has more oxygen. Relaxation exercises and drinking fluids will also help with this problem.

Mood Changes, Concentration Troubles, and Fatigue

You will most likely feel irritable or angry when you quit smoking. This is because your body is desperate to get more nicotine. Relaxation exercises can help you get through this. It is also

important to let your anger out in a safe way. If you try to bottle it up, you will become tenser and you will feel a greater need to have another cigarette.

You may also have difficulty concentrating. This goes back to the increased blood flow to you brain. Basically, your brain is not used to this and is not sure what to do. It is used to relying on the stimulation provided by the nicotine. It will take a few weeks for it to remember how to do its job without the help of the drug.

At the same time, you might experience feelings of fatigue. This is because your metabolic rate returns to normal after you quit smoking. It is important that you don't over exert yourself at this time. Give your body time to become adjusted to the change. This should take a few weeks.

Withdrawal symptoms can begin to appear as soon as 4 hours after your last cigarette. For most people, the intensity of the systems reaches its peak at around three to five days and they disappear after 2 weeks.

Boredom

You might even experience boredom or feel like you are cooped up. This is because you are missing your "friend," the cigarette. You are used to spending time with your cigarette and occupying yourself with smoking. You need to try to find new things to do that will keep both your hands and your mind busy. Try riding a bike, going for a short walk, or swimming. Or, do a small task that will keep your hands busy, such as cooking, doing dishes, painting, writing a letter, knitting, sewing, or gardening. You might even run a few errands or get out of the house for another reason, such as to watch a movie.

How NOT to Gain Weight After Kicking the Smoking Habit

Are you currently in the process of kicking the smoking habit, but are dreading the idea of gaining a few extra pounds? It is estimated that most smokers will gain five to fifteen pounds after successfully kicking the habit. Why the weight gain, you wonder? There are several reasons most ex-smokers end up a bit heavier after their battle to kick the habit.

First, nicotine is a natural appetite suppressant that boosts your metabolism. Second, many heavy smokers can burn up to 200 hundred calories a day. Finally, many people tend to overeat or reward themselves with indulgent foods while kicking the habit, either as a reward or as a substitute. It's no surprise, then, that so many people gain weight after kicking the smoking habit.

A small gain in weight is a small price to pay for the numerous health benefits that come with quitting smoking. Just remember: you can always lose those few extra pounds. In fact, losing a few pounds may seem like a cinch after the hard work of successfully kicking your smoking habit. But if you are just setting out on kicking the smoking habit, here are eight tips on how not to gain weight as you work on becoming healthy and smoke-free.

1) Stock your fridge and pantry with healthy eats. Rather than taking a negative approach, you should see your decision to kick the habit as a positive change in your life to become more healthy and vibrant. To this end, you should do your best to get rid of the junk food and stock up on healthy foods. Many smokers use food as a reward for not smoking, or as a substitute for smoking. Rewarding yourself is perfectly OK, but you should try to avoid food as a reward. However, surrounding yourself with healthy foods will help you avoid gaining weight, in case you should end up relying on food as you strive to stop smoking.

2) Go for a walk or jog whenever a craving strikes. It is recommended that individuals who wish to stop smoking get some form of daily exercise. Exercise helps counter the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal that smokers experience upon quitting. Endorphins—those famous pleasure chemicals—are released each time you become engaged in an exercise activity. Some form of daily exercise will not only help you feel better and keep you distracted from smoking, but it will also ensure that you don't experience any significant weight gain.

3) If you don't have time to incorporate a daily exercise regime into your schedule, try to find hobbies that keep you outside and off the couch. Maybe you can rediscover the freedom and fun of riding a bicycle. Perhaps you enjoy gardening, or note that the yard needs a little work done. For fun, take a dance class, or purchase a videotape you can practice with at home.

4) Avoid drinking alcohol. Not only is alcohol loaded with calories, but also for many people it is often associated with smoking. Drinking alcohol can be difficult without getting the urge to reach for your cigarette case.

5) Practice deep breathing and other relaxation techniques. Whenever you feel the urge to smoke, find a quiet, dark place and sit down for a few moments of deep breathing and visualization. Instead of reaching for the chocolate, chips, or cookies, strive to spend a few moments alone practicing your deep breathing. This will help you overcome the urge to smoke and eat.

6) Treat yourself to non-food reward items. Some individuals treat themselves with decadent dark chocolate, slice of cake, or other rich food items. Give yourself some kind of reward for each day or week that you go without smoking, but strive to reward your self with mostly non-food items. Instead of food, give yourself a long, luxurious bubble bath, a new clothing item, or just the gift of a quiet, stress-free evening watching your favorite TV show or movie.

7) Use smoking cessation products such as nicotine gum or the nicotine patch. These products cannot only help you conquer your smoking habit, they can also keep you from overeating. Whenever you feel the urge to substitute your cigarette with a piece of food, pop a piece of nicotine gum instead.

Five Tips to Avoid Weight Gain When Calling it Quits on Smoking

One concern of many who try to quit smoking is the possibility of weight gain. In truth, it does happen. Not to everyone, but it does happen. On the other hand, some people actually lose weight when they quit smoking and others stay the same. In addition, those who do gain

weight often lose it again in a few months after giving up smoking.

The reasons for weight gain after smoking cessation are varied. For some, smoking actually reduces the appetite. For others, food actually tastes better because their sense of taste has returned. Yet others are in the habit of smoking after a meal. Since they can't smoke, they choose a second helping over a cigarette. For these people eating more than they did while smoking is the cause of the weight gain.

There are also physical changes that occur to the body from smoking. Smoking does increase a person's metabolic rate, which causes calories to burn more quickly. In addition, the body doesn't digest food properly and insulin levels are depressed, which can reduce weight gain. In fact, a heavy smoker can burn up to 200 calories per day from the increased metabolism of smoking.

Make Smoking Your First Priority

Research into the connection between weight gain and smoking cessation has shown that it is best to make smoking your first priority, then, once this is successfully managed, you can look at losing weight if necessary. Trying to quit smoking can be stressful as it is, you don't need to stress yourself out more by worrying about weight gain. Combining both will only serve to stress you more.

Monitor Your Food Intake

Since smoking does increase your metabolic rate, you might want to make a few changes in your diet to compensate for the lack of metabolism. This may not always be necessary. In fact, you may be able to continue your normal diet without gaining weight. But, if you are really concerned about the possibility of gaining weight, you can cut back on a few simple things – such as butter – to reduce your caloric intake.

Some “food” for thought – eliminating the following foods from your diet will help you “make up” those extra 200 calories that may not be getting burned now that you have quit smoking:

- 1 hot dog and roll = 250 calories
- 2 frozen waffles = 240 calories
- 20 potato chips = 220 calories
- 2 light beers = 220 calories
- 2 oz of cheddar cheese = 220 calories
- 4 chocolate sandwich cookies = 213 calories
- 1 small order of McDonald's fries = 210 calories
- 1 cup of macaroni and cheese = 205 calories
- 2 tablespoons of butter = 200 calories

Increase Activity

Even a small amount of added activity can help compensate for the calories that may be no longer burned off when quitting smoking. Now that you have quit smoking, your energy levels should be higher, which should make it easier for you to engage in physical activity.

For example, a brisk 45-minute walk will burn 200 calories, as will 30 minutes of swimming laps. In addition, engaging in these activities can help keep your mind off cravings by distracting you from smoking and helping reduce stress and tension. In fact, your brain releases endorphins when you exercise, which helps make you feel better and increases your metabolism, which helps you burn calories faster and more efficiently.

Satisfy the Oral Fixation

For many smokers, the primary gratification of smoking is to satisfy the oral fixation. Don't substitute food for cigarettes to fulfill this desire. Wait to eat until after the urge to smoke subsides. For starters, eating every time you want a cigarette can certainly lead to weight gain! Secondly, you don't want to substitute food for cigarettes, and eating when you have a craving will "train" your body to rely on food the same way it did cigarettes. Instead, chew a piece of gum.

Drink Fluids

Drinking lots of water has two benefits. First, it makes you feel full, which will make you less likely to overeat. Second, it helps flush out the toxins in your body – namely nicotine. If you absolutely must have something with flavor, try to avoid soft drinks. Instead, keep club soda and vegetable juices on hand.

It's All in Your Head – Erase Those Psychological Cues to Smoke

Anyone who has ever attempted to quit smoking will be able to testify to the fact that it is one of the hardest things they have ever attempted. The failure rate is high, and the road to success is uphill, hard, and fraught with battles of sheer willpower. Studies have shown the addiction to nicotine, as it is delivered via the cigarette smoke, to be comparable to the kind of addiction experienced with heroine and cocaine use.

The physical detoxification process begins as soon as eight hours after the last cigarette is smoked when carbon monoxide levels in the blood normalize. Nicotine remains in the body for the three to four days after the last cigarette is smoked, making this the beginning of the toughest physical withdrawal symptoms.

Withdrawal symptoms are generally characterized by an overall moodiness, a flaring up of temper, anxiety, at times sleeplessness, and an overall feeling of frustration. Unfortunately, the withdrawal period may take a few weeks, and it is crucial for any soon to be ex-smoker to remain resolved to see this through to the end. Physical withdrawals may be eased by the use of nicotine patches, gums, and perhaps even sprays or inhalers. The psychological cues that make it so hard to resist the temptation are harder to deal with, and they may actually take much longer than just a few weeks to deal with.

While there are substances available to help you get over the physical withdrawal process a little easier, the psychological withdrawal is tougher to beat. As a matter of fact, it is quite often the deciding factor for a smoker to take up the habit again, even after beating the

physical withdrawal symptoms. To successfully erase psychological cues to smoke, here are some tips that may come in handy for anyone wishing to quit:

Prepare yourself for the big day. Yes, it would be great to just wake up and toss out your cigarettes, but if you have been smoking for a while, the preparations you make in anticipation of this step count!

Pick a day when you will quit smoking. Gather all your smoking paraphernalia, such as lighters, ashtrays, cigarettes, and have them handy in a big box. Sign up for a Yoga class or maybe a Tai Chi class. Sign up for a smoking cessation class or support group. Even if you decide now you don't need it, it is nice to have the option available if you later on are desperate for some support.

On the big day, take the box with all your smoking paraphernalia and get rid of them permanently. Stashing them in the back of the closet or garage is not the same as taking to the dumpster and disposing of them once and for all! Similarly, air out your house or apartment, have a carpet cleaner come in to thoroughly wash the carpet to get rid of the lingering cigarette smell. Additionally, this is good time to take the drapes to the cleaner, do some laundry and have your hair done.

Recognize the tempting associations. If you have smoked for any length of time, you have probably come to associate certain activities with smoking. Perhaps in the morning you are facing great temptations because you are accustomed to having a cigarette with your morning coffee. Obviously, you don't want to give up breakfast or your morning coffee, but you will need to break the association of cigarette smoking with that activity. Thus, if you usually enjoy your breakfast at the kitchen table, consider moving it outside to the balcony and enjoying a breakfast while overlooking the city.

Another option would be to buy that book you always wanted to read and read while you are eating. Some may consider this to be a bad mannerism, but since you are fighting an addiction, you will most certainly be forgiven for this little lapse in etiquette! You may even consider moving your breakfast table to a different location to give the experience of breakfast a whole new feel.

Avoid tempting situations. Don't accompany your still-smoking office mates outside for their smoking break. Temptation will soar if you do so. Instead socialize with them over a cup of coffee in the break room or anywhere that smoking is not welcomed.

Forgive Your Smoking Relapse and Start Over

You have done it: you have quit smoking, you made a plan, marked the date on your calendar, threw away all of your smoking paraphernalia, toughed out the physiological cravings with the help of a nicotine replacements program perhaps, weathered the psychological cravings, and changed your habits. You have now been smoke free for a little while and you feel like you are on top of the world.

This is when it hits you, a temptation so vicious that you could not fight it, and you gave in: you slipped up and lit up. Sadly, this is not the worst of it; you not only slipped once, but felt so disgusted and frustrated with yourself that you had a full-fledged relapse. Was all for naught?

No, it was not! As a matter of fact, a relapse, while most certainly a setback, may very well be the event you need to solidify your conviction on the subject of quitting your addiction, and a temporary relapse now may quite possibly save you from experiencing a permanent relapse later on. In order to learn from your relapse and move forward, consider these questions and suggestions of dealing with it:

Examine the time and location of your relapse and learn from that experience all you can glean. What prompted you to give in to temptation? Why did you give in on that day rather than on any other day? If, for example, the physical craving was suddenly too strong, perhaps this is the time to have a stash of nicotine patches easily accessible in your desk at work, in your car, purse, or where else you may be.

When you relapsed, what problem did you feel your smoking would solve? Consider what other options are available to you to deal with this issue if and when it comes up again in the future. This is a wonderful opportunity to fortify yourself with alternatives should this situation ever arise again.

If you found that you gave in to temptation out of sheer boredom, seek for an enjoyable hobby that will fill spare time. Perhaps you could become involved with a volunteer organization that will allow you to fill your spare time on your schedule. Or perhaps some recreational classes, such as cooking or art, will fit the bill. The old adage that idle hands are the devil's playground may hold more wisdom than we give grandma credit for!

Understand that a lapse is just that: a temporary setback. While it is true that unlike a brief slip it is a more advanced regression, it is by no means a sentence of permanency. Yes, you will probably have slipped into some old behavior patterns that are leading you back down that road to smoking, but just as you stopped these patterns once, so you will be able to do it again.

Seek positive reinforcement. Be open with friends and family about your relapse and explain how you feel about it. The odds are good that they will not only spur you on, but perhaps will help you to overcome tempting situations. This may also be a good time to consider enrollment in a smoking cessation program to have some help in case another relapse threatens.

Remind yourself of your reasons for quitting. Perhaps you have lost focus of your intentions.

Review the effects of smoking on your body, as well as on those around you. Evaluate your health as it is now, and strive to make that positive change a permanent one.

As you can see, a relapse does not have to be the end of the world. As a matter of fact, it does not mean that you are weak-willed, incapable of quitting the habit, or in any way inferior to any of the other ex-smokers out there. Plenty of them slip up or relapse, but they also get right back onto the non-smoking wagon after they fell off. It is not unusual to relapse and it is important that you not only learn from your experience but that you also forgive yourself for the mistake you made. Remember, you can quit and a relapse is simply a temporary setback!

Tobacco Tempting Teens – How to Talk to Your Kids About This Bad Habit

Smoking during one's teenage years is one of the easiest times to become addicted to smoking. The media, peer pressure, lack of knowledge, as well as other factors all are given as messages to teenagers to begin smoking. This causes them to move towards developing a bad habit out of smoking. As a parent, it is important to have tools that will move against what is being seen about smoking. By giving them alternative ideals that move away from smoking, you will be giving them an alternative answer to developing a bad habit. There are several different types of tools that you can use in order to help your teen to never stop smoking.

The best preventative measures that you can take as a parent is to have the knowledge available to give to your teen about smoking. This will allow them to make a conscious decision about what smoking does and causes. By talking to them about this bad habit, they will be less likely to fall into the peer pressure of smoking.

One of the things that you can tell a teen that will help to prevent them from smoking is to let them know what cigarettes are made of and what chemicals they are inhaling. Tar is one of the chemicals that are used for cigarettes. Another type of chemical used in cigarettes is hydrogen cyanide. This is the same chemical that is used to kill rats and was used during World War II to help with the mass killings that were taking place.

Benzene, a chemical used for gasoline, is also in cigarettes. Acetone, a nail polish remover is another chemical that is dominant in cigarettes. Nicotine, which is the chemical that causes the addiction of tobacco, is also in cigarettes. If you tell your teens what they are inhaling, it may help in preventing the temptations of beginning to smoke by peers.

Another strategy that can be used with knowledge to help your teenagers to stay away from smoking is to be direct about what smoking can do to their health. Being direct about facts that include death rates and smoke related illnesses will help your children to recognize the down-falls of smoking. Lung cancer, statistics on deaths from smoking, and health related issues that are concerned with smoking can all be used as tools to help your teenagers see the other side of what tobacco can cause.

Being a youth is a time where self-image and self-esteem begin to develop. This has caused tobacco use among teenagers to be an easy means for getting youth addicted to smoking. Teenagers will look at media images, which portray smoking as acceptable. They will then see this reflected through peer groups. Often times' youth will begin to smoke because of what they see through the environment around them.

You can easily move them away from these images by helping teens to develop their own self-image and confidence. By contradicting this image with allowing them to see their own self-confidence and move away from the idea of what smoking means as portrayed by others, it will be easier for them to say no.

One of the major reasons why teenagers begin to smoke is because of the peer pressure that is consistently around them to try smoking. Because of this, you should think of effective methods to go against the peer pressure around them. For example, you can help your teenager to stay away from smoking as a habit by practicing situations and scenarios with them

that will allow them to learn to say no and build their self-image. Role playing and discussing different ways for them to overcome peer pressure will help your teenager to learn an alternative method to being pressured into smoking.

As the different portrayals are seen in society about smoking, more teenagers and children are beginning to pick up the habit. The average age for one to begin smoking is by the age of eleven, and several are addicted by the age of fourteen. By understanding the situation that your child is in, and responding to this with knowledge and building of self-image and confidence, you will know that you have helped to give an alternative solution to prevent your child from forming a bad habit.

Banish Bad Breath – Quit Smoking!

One of the effects that smoking has on you is that it causes bad breath as well as other dental problems. There are several reasons why smoking causes problems with your breath and oral hygiene. While there may be some temporary fixes to banish bad breath, the easiest way to get rid of the bad oral hygiene is to quit smoking.

The main reason for bad breath when smoking is found to be caused by the chemicals in cigarettes. These are then moved into your mouth, where they can build up. Tar and nicotine easily begin to build up on the mouth surfaces. They can stick to places like the teeth, gums, tongue and side of the cheeks. This causes smoker's breath to form.

One of the major results of the chemicals in the cigarettes is that it allows bacteria to form in your mouth. The first way in which bacteria is able to stay in your mouth is from these chemicals. When they stay on your mouth's surface, it allows the bacteria to stick to certain places, giving them a place to thrive.

Another reason why smoking causes bad breath, is because it dries out your mouth. In consequence, this stops the saliva from continuously flowing and cleansing out your mouth. This is what causes the growth of certain types of bacteria in your mouth, which then lead to a continuous odor on your breath. Because the saliva is not able to move as freely, it can't clean out the bacteria that move through your mouth. These same parts of smoking also cause cavities and yellowing of teeth to form easier.

Another reason why smoking will cause bad breath is because it raises the temperature in your mouth. This causes oral tissue cells to be damaged and killed. These will then not be able to protect the mouth efficiently, causing the bacteria to be able to move into the mouth easier. This may eventually lead to more serious problems with your oral hygiene.

More serious problems with smoking and dental hygiene may include gum disease and oral cancer. This can cause long-term effects by someone who smokes. The tobacco that moves into your system causes your immune system to limit how it can fight infection. It also stops the growing of blood vessels. Both of these contribute to one who smokes getting gum disease or oral cancer.

One of the ways that most smokers will get rid of bad breath is by using a certain type of smoke screen gum. This will neutralize the odor causing bacteria on your tongue after you smoke a cigarette. However, this type of gum is usually fairly expensive and does not eliminate the bad breath after you smoke another cigarette. The bacteria are still able to move inside your mouth, and the chemicals that stick to your teeth, gums, tongue and cheeks still remain in place. Most quick remedies that are there for smokers are used for shorter-term fixes and are unable to eliminate the complex problems that form in your oral hygiene from smoking.

The easiest way to prevent dental problems and bad breath is by stopping smoking all together. This will begin to change several of the problems that have occurred with bad breath because of smoking. After you quit smoking, the saliva in your mouth is able to move more freely. This will naturally begin to get rid of the extra bacteria that were able to grow in your mouth. The next thing that will happen is the blood vessels and the tissue cells will begin to repair. Nutrients, such as Vitamin C, which were being killed by the bacteria before, will have a chance to repair and build back in your mouth. This is one of the main agents that will fight the bacteria.

Eventually, the chemicals, tar and nicotine that were beginning to stay in your mouth will also be washed away. This will leave no room for the bacteria to stay in your mouth and cause the bad breath. When you quit smoking, your mouth will begin to rebuild the damaged areas. These will not only help to prevent bad breath, but also things such as stained teeth, and more serious problems dealing with gum disease and oral cancer.

Deciding to quit smoking is a choice that will help with your health in many areas, including your oral hygiene. By deciding to quit smoking, your mouth will be able to function better and remain healthy. If you want to eliminate your bad breath or smokers' breath then deciding to quit smoking is the best way to do it.

Switching Habits – Quit Smoking and Start Moving

Because nicotine acts as an appetite suppressant, many smokers who try to quit also face the prospect of gaining weight. To increase the health benefits of quitting and also reduce your risk of weight gain, why not put down the cigarettes and pick up good exercise habits at the same time?

Battle the Bulge

As mentioned above, smokers who are trying to quit may gain weight due to the fact that smoking affects your metabolism. It is also common for ex-smokers to want something in their fingers besides a cigarette, which can lead to excessive snacking on junk food. For many smokers, a cigar or cigarette marks the end of meal. Without that cue to stop eating, ex-smokers may continue long past the point of fullness.

The good news is that, within three days of quitting, you will have more energy. Put that excess energy to work and begin a workout plan. If you have been leading a mostly sedentary life with little physical activity, be sure to start slow and not overdo the amount of exertion. Begin with

an easier activity such as walking or light stretching. Once you are comfortable with these activities, you can continue with those or move into more challenges forms of exercise such as group sports and strength training. No matter what your physical shape is, be sure to consult with a doctor before starting a new workout regimen.

Along with exercise, watching what you eat will help you stay slim and become more fit as you quit smoking. Rather than reaching for potato chips during your favorite TV show, keep celery or carrots sticks handy. This fulfills the need to have something between your fingers without adding too many calories or fat. Carefully control your food portions so that, when the food on your plate is gone, you have eaten the appropriate amount of calories. This way, you won't need the cigarette to signal a meal's end.

Manage Stress

Stress is a factor of everyday life, whether it happens at work or at home. Many smokers list stress reduction as one of the reasons they continue to smoke. Therefore, if smoking is a stress management technique for you, quitting smoking will take away a stress management skill as well as place new stress on you in dealing with nicotine withdrawal and creating a new lifestyle for yourself.

However, regular physical exercise is a great stress management technique. Pay attention to your body to learn whether you are an early riser or prefer to work out in the afternoons or evenings. When you feel a nicotine craving coming on, grab your tennis shoes and go for a walk or practice the calming practice of yoga. Even ten minutes of exercise at a time can help keep stress at a manageable level.

Learn New Activities

Use exercise as a reward for learning to take better care of your body. Have you always wanted to learn how to ski or swing dance? Now's your chance!

Within three to nine months after quitting, your lung function will be greatly improved and any coughing, wheezing, or breathing problems should be a thing of the past. Plus, with all the money you've saved on buying cigarettes, cigars, or other tobacco products, you can afford to join a gym, take some classes, or even splurge on a sports trip for hiking or skiing.

At home, use exercise tapes and books to learn everyday exercises that will increase your aerobic fitness. To keep up your motivation, make plans with a spouse or friend to work out together. Another good way to maintain your drive to exercise is to set goals like finishing a 5k race or making it through an entire kickboxing class without needing to take a breather. When you have achieved one of your fitness goals, pat yourself on the back for becoming a smoke-free, healthier version of you.

The opportunities for physical activity range from equipment-free, low maintenance exercises to options that require a significant amount of equipment and training. Popular activities include:

- Walking
- Running

- Yoga
- Team sports
- Golf
- Skiing
- Swimming
- Kickboxing/Martial Arts
- Strength training
- Ice skating/Rollerblading

Now that you've made the decision to quit smoking, taking your fitness goals one step further and get moving at the same time. Starting a new, positive habit to replace the old one will keep your mind engaged and give you a great sense of accomplishment. You'll also become more fit and healthy in the bargain!

Withdrawals with Grace – Six Tips to Staying on the “Quit Smoking” Game Plan

Making the decision to quit smoking, although a huge step; is only the first step in a long journey. Once you have decided to quit, how do you stay on the straight and narrow? Read on to learn six tips for quitting successfully.

Make a list of reasons to quit.

Make a list of reasons why you want to quit. Or, if you still take a bit more convincing, make a list of pros and cons to smoking. If you're like the majority of smokers, the cons of smoking will greatly outweigh the pros.

Do you want to quit because you are concerned about health—either you're own or that of your loved ones? Maybe you realized that the price of smoking is actually costing you a better car, new clothes, or even a house down payment. Whatever your reasons for quitting, write them down and keep them handy to remind yourself when the going gets rough.

Anticipate your cravings and formulate a plan of attack.

Nicotine is an addictive drug. It's only a matter of time before you start getting cravings; depending on how often you smoked, it may only be a matter of minutes!

When you are getting ready to quit, pay attention to when you smoke. Is it on a regular schedule? Do you smoke when you are stressed or tired? Note both the times of day and the situations that cause you to reach for a cigarette and think of ways that you can avoid doing that in the future. If being in bars or social situations makes you want to smoke, you may need to spend more time at home until you get your cravings under control.

If you miss the smoke breaks at work, be sure to take a break during the day by walking around your building or finding a quiet place and reading a magazine for about the same length of time you would have been out smoking.

Many people also find that medications can help with nicotine withdrawal. Several medications are approved by the U.S. FDA, and are available either over the counter or as a prescription. Talk to your doctor about what medication, if any, may be right for you.

Join support groups.

Your first support group should be your close family and friends. Let them know that you are going to quit, and ask them to encourage you throughout the process. People who are around you every day also need to be patient, since quitting can often make people irritable. Just ask for their support and understanding, and the people you care about will probably be happy to help you become a healthier person.

Even if you have support from family and friends, temptation still abounds. Former smoking buddies may tempt you to smoke, either because they miss you at the smoke breaks or because they feel guilty for not quitting. What many ex-smokers find helpful is support groups made of others that are currently quitting or who have successfully quit. Many such groups are available online as discussion forums such as WhyQuit, the American Lung Association's Freedom from Smoking®, and The Quit Smoking Company's message boards. If you'd prefer in-person support, visit Nicotine Anonymous or Smart Recovery to learn about groups in your area.

Don't let a minor slip-up become a major deterrent.

The fact is most people are not successful the first time they try to quit. Don't be too hard on yourself if you give in to the urge one day and smoke a cigarette. You could use it as an excuse to become a full-time smoker again. Or you could accept that mistakes happen, and try again the next day. Having one or two cigarettes while you're trying to quit doesn't negate all of your good efforts.

If you fall off the bandwagon, pull out your list of reasons to quit and re-motivate yourself. Take the time to think about why you smoked and how you could avoid it in the future. If you don't succeed in quitting the first time and go back to smoking, remember that every day is an opportunity to become a nonsmoker. When you finally succeed in quitting, all those other times will have contributed by giving you practice and reminding you of the benefits of quitting.

Make a list of goals.

Now that you have your list of reasons why you want to quit, also make a companion list of goals both smoking and nonsmoking related to motivate yourself. Maybe you've tried to quit before and had a relapse after one month; therefore, making it past one month this time would be a significant accomplishment. If you are quitting in hopes of achieving better physical fitness, your goals might be finishing a 5k race or playing with your child for an hour without getting tired.

Your goals can be anything, as long as looking at them reminds you of why you wanted to quit in the first place, and motivates you to stick with it.

Reward yourself for reaching those goals.

Once you've reached a goal on your list, take the time to reward yourself for your hard work. Quitting smoking is a difficult process, and rewarding yourself along the way helps keep you motivated and moving forward. As you reward yourself with a new outfit, a night on the town, or a favorite dessert, think about how far you've come and what a great feeling it will be when you reach the Big Goal: quitting smoking for good.

Baby Your Baby and Nix the Nicotine

As a smoker, you endanger your health with every cigarette, cigar, or tobacco product you use. But the stakes rise even higher if you are pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant. Learn about how smoking affects: your chances to get pregnant, your baby's health during the pregnancy, and your newborn's well being up through the first year after birth.

Getting Pregnant

If you currently use oral contraceptives and smoke, you are at a greater risk for cardiovascular diseases and high blood pressure. Female smokers have only 72 percent of a nonsmoker's fertility. Likewise, male smokers face a 50 percent higher risk of becoming impotent. Research shows that smoking may decrease ovulatory response and impair the fertilization and implantation of the zygote.

It is also believed that tobacco chemicals may cause the cervical fluid to become toxic to sperm, which greatly increases difficulty in conceiving. It has also been argued that toxic chemicals in cigarettes may cause gene mutations, which could result in birth defects, cancer, miscarriages, and a myriad of other health problems for children of smokers. These gene mutations would affect babies whose fathers are smokers—not just the mothers.

During Pregnancy and Childbirth

During pregnancy, tobacco chemicals are passed from a mother who is a smoker to the fetus through the bloodstream. These chemicals, toxic to both mother and child, present serious risks. Studies have shown that smoking during pregnancy is associated with numerous health problems, including low birth weight, placenta previa, premature delivery, premature membrane rupture, miscarriage, and neonatal death.

If a newborn has a mother who smoked during pregnancy, that child's nicotine levels in the bloodstream will be equal to that of the mother. In the first few days after birth, the child of a smoking mother will suffer from withdrawal symptoms.

After Birth

After the baby is born, the baby's health continues to be affected by a smoking mother or father. During its first year, a baby with parents who smoke will experience higher risk of pneumonia and bronchitis. Babies of smokers are also at increased risk of frequent, severe asthma attacks.

Children exposed to secondhand smoke (passive smoking) are more susceptible to its ill effects because of their increased breathing rate. Secondhand smoke can cause children to have more colds, respiratory problems, earaches, and sicknesses requiring a physician's care. Asthma or allergies can be made more severe when children are exposed to secondhand smoke. Eventually, children of smokers are at a greater risk of becoming regular smokers themselves.

How to Quit

Once you have made the decision to quit smoking and ensure a healthier future for yourself and your child, the benefits begin almost immediately. Twenty minutes after your last cigarette, your blood pressure and pulse rate return to normal. Within the first three days, carbon dioxide and nicotine is eliminated from the system, your energy levels increase, and breathing becomes easier.

A year after quitting an ex-smoker's circulation will be improved, and lung functions increased. Ten years after quitting, the risk of lung cancer is 50% that of a smoker and risk of a heart attack is equal to that of a nonsmoker.

Even knowing all of its benefits, though, is not always enough to make quitting a feasible goal. Smokers who have successfully kicked the habit suggest several ways to cope with the difficult process of breaking a nicotine addiction.

First of all, make a list of reasons why to quit. As someone who is pregnant or thinking of becoming pregnant, the health of your baby will be at the top of your list. This is a great opportunity to stop making excuses and motivate your self to quit in a specific time frame. Other reasons may include your health and wellbeing, financial concerns, or even improved appearance and getting rid of the distinctive smell of tobacco. Whenever you are tempted to start smoking again, take out your list and remind yourself why you'd rather quit.

Another tried-and-true technique is to surround your self with support. Tell friends and family about your intention to quit and ask them for encouragement and patience throughout the process. Join support groups formed specifically for people that are quitting smoking. Both online and local groups are available, depending on your preference for in-person contact or 24/7 advice. Many groups such as the American Lung Association or the American Cancer Society will help you find support groups or offer online support. Another good place to look for support is to your health or insurance provider.

If you smoke before, during, or after becoming pregnant, you put both your health and the health of your baby at risk. If you quit smoking, however, the benefits begin only 20 minutes after your first cigarette and continue for years to come. Ensure a healthy start for your baby by quitting smoking today!

Be a Grandparent – Quit Smoking When Your Kids Are Still Kids

The most likely candidates to become addicted to smoking are those who start in their teen years. If you've been smoking for years, it may be difficult to quit when you become pregnant.

But quitting before, during, and after pregnancy offer significant health benefits to you and your offspring.

If you're pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant, use this as motivation to quit smoking once and for all. If you already have children, it's not too late to quit smoking and improve the quality of life for your entire family!

Before and During Pregnancy

Even before pregnancy, smoking can even affect your fertility. Female smokers have a harder time conceiving. Smokers have been shown to have a 3.4 times greater chance than nonsmokers for needing a year or more to become pregnant. More recent studies demonstrate that smoking in women may impair the fertilization and implantation of the zygote, and decrease ovulatory response.

Likewise, male smokers are 50 percent more susceptible to becoming impotent. It is also suspected that tobacco chemicals could change the cervical fluid to become toxic to sperm, which increases the difficulty of conceiving.

If smokers do manage to become pregnant, the worries associated with smoking are far from over. If the mother continues to smoke, tobacco chemicals are passed to the fetus through the blood stream. Smoking during pregnancy is also associated with low birth weight, placenta previa and preterm delivery, premature rupture of membranes, miscarriage, and neonatal death.

Newborns and Children

After a successful delivery, the effect of a smoking parent on the baby's health continues—with the additional danger of father who smokes, as well. Newborns have the same amount of nicotine levels in their bloodstream as their mothers, and suffer withdrawal in the first few days after birth. In its first year of life, a baby with one or both parents who smoke will be more at risk to contract pneumonia and bronchitis. Babies of smokers are also at greater risk of frequent, severe asthma attacks.

Throughout life, if parents continue to smoke, their children will be exposed to secondhand smoke, which is also called passive smoking. Because of their increased breathing rate, children inhale more air and pollutants relative to their body weight than adults.

The effects of secondhand smoking include increased susceptibility to colds, respiratory problems, earaches, and sicknesses requiring a doctor's visit. Even brief exposure to secondhand smoke can cause headaches, dizziness, and nausea. Children with allergies or asthma can have their symptoms worsen when exposed to secondhand smoke. Finally, children of smokers are also more likely to eventually become regular smokers themselves.

The Benefits of Quitting

As a concerned parent, you're considering quitting smoking. But what exactly are the benefits, and how long do they take to appear? The first benefit—blood pressure and pulse returning to

normal—happens only 20 minutes after you finish your last cigarette.

In the first three days after quitting, all carbon dioxide and nicotine is eliminated from a smoker's body. The lungs begin clearing out mucous and smoking-related pollutants. Your sense of taste and smell will improve markedly, and breathing eases as the bronchial tubes relax. In a mere 72 hours, your energy level will also increase.

Within four months after quitting, a smoker's circulation will improve. Three to nine months later, lung functions increase up to 10%, which means coughing, wheezing, and breathing problems improve greatly. Five years post-quitting, the risk of a heart attack falls to 50% of a smoker's risk. After 10 years as an ex-smoker, you risk of lung cancer is just half that of a smoker, and heart attack risk is equal to that of a complete nonsmoker.

Overall, these improvements in physical fitness can help you become a better parent. You will have more energy to devote to your children, as well as a decreased risk of heart attacks and cancer. Similarly, your children will become healthier and learn about a fit, active lifestyle that they can maintain for years to come.

No matter how long you've been smoking for, quitting when you become a parent can help improve your health and that of your children. It has almost immediate physical benefits as well as long-term mental benefits, such as encouraging your children by example not to smoke. Use parenthood as a reason to quit smoking, and enjoy your increased health and fitness into many years of grandparenthood!

What a Nicotine Vaccine Can Mean for Smokers

Many smokers who would like to quit often find themselves on a seemingly endless cycle of cessation and then relapse. The repeated failure to quit smoking can make some smokers feel frustrated and hopeless. Fortunately, a new weapon in the battle against nicotine addiction is currently being developed that may bring hope to even the most hardened smokers. This new smoking cessation aid is not a new gum or patch, but a nicotine vaccine that shows great promise in helping smokers quit.

The vaccine, developed by Nabi Biopharmaceuticals, is called NicVax and so far, all clinical trials have demonstrated that NicVax is successful at helping even lifelong smokers quit. Although smoking cessation is still one of the hardest things anyone will ever do for their health, this new nicotine vaccine can mean a new lifeline for smokers who have repeatedly tried, and failed, to kick the habit for good.

How NicVax Works

NicVax works by producing antibodies that are formulated to attach to nicotine. The antibodies prevent the nicotine chemicals from reaching the brain. The antibody complex is too big to be carried across the blood-brain barrier, thus the chemical effects of nicotine do not reach the brain. Essentially, NicVax works by hindering the effects of nicotine. Smokers who get the NicVax vaccine do not get the nicotine kick that they normally would.

The NicVax vaccine must be administered in a doctor's office via injection.

Who Could Benefit from the NicVax Vaccine?

NicVax could potentially help a large segment of individuals who find themselves unable to quit smoking on their own. Lifelong smokers can use NicVax to slowly wean themselves off of cigarettes. Since NicVax suppresses the effects of nicotine, smokers who get the NicVax vaccine will find smoking to be less rewarding and find themselves depending less and less on cigarettes.

The NicVax vaccine can also potentially be used to treat other forms of nicotine and tobacco addiction. Frequent users of chewing tobacco, for instance, may be able to benefit from NicVax. With the clinical trial success of NicVax, vaccines for other forms of substance addictions are currently under development.

Are There Any Side Effects?

The NicVax vaccine is still quite new, and all of its effects are still unknown. However, all clinical trials indicate that the NicVax vaccine is quite safe, with very few side effects noted. This is probably due to the fact that NicVax affects the blood stream, and does not interfere with an individual's neurochemistry.

Will the NicVax Vaccine Work for Everyone?

The NicVax vaccine shows great potential for helping a large segment of the smoking population greatly reduce or cease their dependence on cigarettes. It appears that one of the greatest determining factors in predicting the success of the NicVax vaccine is in the commitment of each individual user. Before taking the NicVax vaccine, an individual must consciously plan to reduce their use of cigarettes with aid of the vaccine treatment, until they have succeeded in quitting altogether.

Because NicVax is still relatively new, researchers are still determining the success rate of the vaccine, although clinical trials show great promise. In one of its first clinical trials, researchers administered the NicVax vaccine to 68 smokers for 38 weeks. The smokers were separated into different groups, with one group receiving a small amount of the NicVax vaccine, the second group receiving a moderate amount, and the third group receiving the highest amount of the NicVax vaccine.

Researchers found that the group that was given the highest dose of NicVax was most successful. Approximately 38% of the smokers who received the highest dose were able to quit smoking for a minimum period of 30 days.

Another clinical trial indicates that the NicVax vaccine has the potential for high efficacy. When tested on lab rats, the NicVax vaccine suppressed 64% of the nicotine that would normally reach the brain.

How Long Can the Effects of the NicVax Vaccine Be Felt?

Clinical trials indicate that the NicVax vaccine can have long-lasting effects. One shot of NicVax can help suppress the effects of nicotine in a smoker for up to a year. This aspect of the NicVax vaccine can be particularly helpful to smokers who have repeatedly tried to quit smoking, but have a history of relapse.

Ten Lifestyle and Cosmetic Benefits to Quitting Smoking

If you're a smoker, quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for your health. The health benefits to quitting are well documented. As soon as you quit smoking your body will begin to repair itself. Your blood pressure will decrease, your body's temperature will increase, the carbon monoxide in your blood will begin drop, you'll experience a better lung capacity, your sense of smell and taste will improve, and your chance of a heart attack will decrease significantly.

These are just some of the health benefits that your body experiences immediately after you quit smoking. What are some of the lifestyle and cosmetic benefits to quitting smoking? Here are ten benefits that will make you want to kick the smoking habit for good.

1) More money in your wallet. With the prices of cigarettes at their highest, and taxes going up all the time, you'll definitely feel the effect of quitting in your wallet. Think of all the things you'll be able to purchase with the money you currently spend on cigarettes. Sit down and do the math. How much do you spend on cigarettes each week? How much for a year? Make a list of all the things you could afford to do or buy if you quit smoking now.

2) More energy. Smoking drains a lot of your body's reserves. Quitting means your body will receive more of the oxygen that nicotine and smoke used to steal away. You'll feel more energized and less sluggish once you quit. You will feel stronger, and not have to worry about the damage you are doing to your body by smoking. You will be able to work out like you couldn't before. You can climb a set of stairs again without puffing!

3) Your complexion will improve. Smoking wreaks havoc on your skin, causing signs of premature aging and an all around bad texture. Quitting will help your skin's elasticity and texture improve significantly. No more yellow skin or wrinkles around your mouth!

4) Your house, car, and clothes will smell good again. Many lifelong smokers olfactory sense is suppressed by cigarettes, so they cannot smell just how bad cigarette smoke really smells. Cigarette smoke clings to fabrics, causing an unpleasant odor. When you quit smoking, you no longer have to worry about the smell of your personal items or environment.

5) Cigarette stains on your teeth will begin to fade. Cigarettes are notorious for yellowing teeth. Once you quit, the stains will begin to fade.

6) Your sense of smell and taste will improve. Cigarette's suppress your sense of smell and taste. When you quit smoking, food begins to taste better. You will be able to smell the roses again!

7) No more anxiety or guilt. With so many warnings directed at smokers, it's very easy to develop a sense of anxiety and guilt over being a smoker. When you quit smoking, you no longer have to feel anxious about the damage you are doing to your body. And you no longer feel the guilt for exposing family or friends to second-hand smoke.

8) You don't have to worry about going to non-smoking venues anymore. With so many anti-smoking measures enacted in cities across the country, it can be easy to feel unwelcome at many restaurants, clubs, and other non-smoking venues. When you quit smoking, you can go anywhere and do anything without having to worry about ducking out to smoke.

9) Your diet will probably improve. One major lifestyle benefit of quitting smoking is that it will probably improve your diet. Most smokers use cigarettes as a substitute for food at one time or another. When you quit smoking, you will no longer wreak havoc on your body by smoking in place of a well-balanced meal. And you will be able to taste your food better than before!

10) Quitting will give you a sense of pride unrivalled by almost anything else you will do for your health. Quitting smoking is like running a marathon successfully. You can take pride that you accomplished perhaps one of the most difficult things you will ever do in your life. You will feel like a champ, and this sense of strength and pride will probably affect all other aspects of your life.

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