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Health and Social Services

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## Quit Smoking Medication

If you find that your withdrawal symptoms are becoming more severe, talk to your pharmacist or physician about using medication that can help you cope with withdrawal symptoms, cravings and quitting smoking. Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT), Zyban, or Champix, can help reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms and also help you cope with the cravings. Please check with your pharmacist or physician to determine which product and dosage is right for you.

# QuitPack News

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 9

SEP/OCT 2008

When you are trying to become smoke-free, your brain and body begin the process of healing themselves. At the beginning of the quitting process, people may experience symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. This can be one of the hardest things you will have to deal with on your path to becoming smoke-free. Although physical withdrawal from nicotine can be uncomfortable while it lasts, the good news is that withdrawal is only temporary. In this issue, we will take a look at some of the most common symptoms of withdrawal and some useful ways to deal with them. Understanding what to expect when you quit smoking and following the tips provided here for coping can help you move through this stage more easily.

## Dealing with Withdrawal



When smokers try to cut back or quit, the lack of nicotine can lead to withdrawal symptoms. Withdrawal is both physical and mental. Physically, the body reacts to the absence of nicotine. Mentally, the smoker is faced with giving up a routine or crutch, which calls for a major change in behavior. Both must be addressed in order for the quitting process to work.

The number and intensity of symptoms felt or noticed and how long they last will vary from person to person. While some smokers don't experience any symptoms at all, others experience various withdrawal symptoms. In general, symptoms begin within hours of stopping smoking and peak about 2-3 days later. They can be worse in the evening.

Some of the common symptoms are:

- Cravings to smoke
- Irritability
- Insomnia
- Fatigue
- Inability to Concentrate
- Headache
- Cough (especially coughing up phlegm)
- Sore throat
- Constipation, gas, stomach pain
- Dry mouth
- Sore tongue and/or gums
- Postnasal drip
- Tightness in the chest

Source: <http://quitsmoking.about.com/cs/cravingsandurges/a/withdrawal.htm>

Withdrawal symptoms can last anywhere between a few days to several weeks. Most symptoms should be gone within three weeks, but some can last up to five weeks.

Many people fail may not be prepared to deal with the withdrawal symptoms. Therefore, it is important to find positive strategies to cope with withdrawal and stay motivated during the time when you are experiencing them.

## Why does smoking help me relax?

Many smokers use cigarettes as a way of dealing with stress, which is paradoxical because nicotine is a stimulant.

However, what does relax smokers is the actual act of smoking: the smoker takes a drag and breathes in deeply, holds it for a couple of seconds and breathes out slowly through the nose or mouth.

This comprises the basic relaxation technique. Try the same technique without the cigarette when you are trying to relax. If you feel that you need something in your mouth, try a straw or a cinnamon stick.

Find other activities that can help you relax. Take time to do it - relaxation is a key component of healthy living.

Signs & symptoms	Causes	How long it may last	What you can do
Irritability (bad mood)	Body's craving for nicotine	2-4 weeks	Walks, hot baths, relaxation techniques e.g. soft music, stretching
Feeling tired, lack of energy	Nicotine is a stimulant - it keeps your brain active. It can take a couple of weeks for your body to learn to live without the boost from nicotine.	2-4 weeks	Take a nap if you're tired Don't push yourself
Trouble sleeping	Nicotine affects brain waves and sleep patterns	1 week	Avoid caffeine (e.g. coffee or sodas)
Cough Dry throat Nasal drip (mucus slides down back of the throat)	Your body is getting rid of the mucus that has been trapped in your air ways	A few days	Drink lots of water or juice
Feeling dizzy	Your body is getting more oxygen	1 or 2 days	When you've been sitting in a chair or lying down, get up slowly
Trouble concentrating	Your body needs time to get used to being without the constant stimulation (boost) from nicotine	A few weeks	Reduce your workload and take lots of breaks
Tightness in chest	May be caused by sore muscles from coughing or tense muscles from nicotine cravings	A few weeks	Deep breathing
Gas Stomach pain Constipation	Bowel (intestinal) movement drops briefly		Drink lots of water and eat high-fibre foods e.g. fruits and vegetables
Hunger	You can confuse craving for cigarettes with hunger Your mouth is getting used to having nothing to do	2-4 weeks	Drink water and eat low calorie snacks: raw veggies, pretzels, popcorn, fruit
Craving for a cigarette	Withdrawal from the highly addictive drug, nicotine	Cravings occur most often in the first few days; some people have cravings occasionally for months or years	Wait out urges - they tend to last only a few minutes. Try another activity - have a drink of water, take a walk, call a friend or use a nicotine replacement product (e.g. gum)

Source: Canadian Lung Association [http://www.lung.ca/protect-protegez/tobacco-tabagisme/quitting-cesser/index\\_e.php](http://www.lung.ca/protect-protegez/tobacco-tabagisme/quitting-cesser/index_e.php)

## Coping with Withdrawal

If you plan ahead, know and understand the symptoms that can appear after you quit smoking, and plan how to deal with them, you will be better able to cope and increase your chances of becoming smoke-free successfully. Motivation is the key. If you are experiencing withdrawal symptoms, try communicating with others about what you are experiencing and gain their support and understanding.

There are many methods and techniques to help you deal with the symptoms of withdrawal. Please refer to the table for some suggestions on specific withdrawal symptoms and also try the following suggestions and ideas:

### 4-Ds:

*Delay* until the urge passes - usually within 3 to 5 minutes.

*Distract* yourself - Call a friend or go for a walk.

*Drink* water to fight off cravings.

*Deep Breaths* - Close your eyes and take 10 slow, deep breaths.

Source: <http://quitsmoking.about.com/cs/cravingsandurges/a/withdrawal.htm>

### Physical Activity:

Physical activity is a great way of dealing with withdrawal. Physical activity helps reduce withdrawal symptoms and cravings, provides distractions, and contributes to better overall health in general.

If you are not physically active regularly, try to start slowly. Go for a walk once or twice a day for 10-30 minutes and work up from there. Pick physical activities that you enjoy and with which you are comfortable because this will make it more likely that you will continue doing them as you continue on your path to becoming smoke-free.

### Rest:

When you quit smoking, your body will need some time to adjust to living without nicotine and the other chemicals found in cigarettes. This may leave you feeling tired and drained. It is important to make sure that you get enough rest (i.e. sleep) to help your body adjust and reduce feelings of stress that may come with withdrawal.