



## Coping with Withdrawal Symptoms

Quitting smoking brings about a variety of physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms. For some people, coping with withdrawal symptoms is like riding a roller coaster – there may be sharp turns, slow climbs, and unexpected plunges. Most physical symptoms manifest within the first one to two days, peak within the first week, and subside within two to four weeks. Any new symptoms should be notified to a health professional, especially if severe. Recent medication changes and caffeine intake can have an impact on symptoms. It may take longer to break the psychological dependence caused by constant triggers and social cues associated with smoking.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	DURATION	RELIEF
<b>Craving for a cigarette</b>	Nicotine is a strongly addictive drug, and withdrawal causes cravings.	A craving for a cigarette can last for between 3-5 minutes and occurs frequently for 2-3 days; after quitting smoking.	Use of nicotine medication will help reduce cravings and other nicotine withdrawal symptoms. Wait out the urge, a craving lasts only a few minutes. Distract yourself. Exercise (take walks). Drink a glass of water or fruit juice. Breathe slowly and deeply.
<b>Irritability</b>	The body's craving for nicotine can produce irritability.	2-4 weeks	Use of nicotine medication will help reduce cravings and other nicotine withdrawal symptoms. Take walks. Use relaxation techniques.
<b>Dizziness</b>	The body is getting extra oxygen	1-2 days	Use extra caution when moving from standing to sitting and change positions slowly.
<b>Constipation, stomach pain, gas</b>	Intestinal movement decreases for a brief period.	1-2 weeks	Drink plenty of fluids. Add fruit, vegetables, and whole-grain cereals to diet.
<b>Cough, dry throat, nasal drip</b>	The body is getting rid of mucus, which has blocked airways and restricted breathing.	A few days	Drink plenty of fluids. Avoid additional stress during first few weeks.
<b>Depressed mood</b>	It is normal to feel sad for a period of time after you first quit smoking. Some people have a low mood. They may have used smoking as a coping mechanism for stress.	1-2 weeks	Increase pleasurable activities. Talk with your clinician about changes in your mood when quitting. Get extra support from friends and family.
<b>Difficulty concentrating</b>	The body needs time to adjust to not having constant stimulation from nicotine.	A few weeks	Plan workload accordingly. Avoid additional stress during first few weeks.
<b>Fatigue</b>	Nicotine is a stimulant.	2-4 weeks	Use of a nicotine medication may help. Take naps. Try to take things a little easier for the first couple of weeks.
<b>Hunger</b>	Cravings for a cigarette can be confused with hunger pangs; sensations may result from oral cravings or the desire for something in the mouth.	Up to several weeks	Drink water or low-calorie liquids. Be prepared with low-calorie snacks.
<b>Insomnia</b>	Nicotine affects brain wave function and influences sleep patterns; coughing and dreams about smoking are common.	2-4 weeks	Use relaxation techniques. Limit caffeine intake because its effects will increase after quitting smoking.

Adapted from *Materials from the National Cancer Institute, U.S. National Institutes of Health.*

