

What to Expect when Quitting

Seton Tobacco Education Resource Center

5555 N. Lamar Blvd.,
Suite J-125
Austin, Texas 78751

Phone: 512-324-2762
Fax: 512-324-3341
Tobacco-center@seton.org

**Save your lungs,
save your life.**

Quitting smoking or tobacco can be one of the best decisions you make for your health and quality of life. The thought of preparing for your quit day can be overwhelming. However, preparing for your journey as a nonsmoker or former tobacco user doesn't need to be, if you know what to expect and what to do.

It's also important to understand that quitting tobacco seems hard to do, not because it's a bad habit you've been used to doing for a long time, but because it's a powerful addiction to the nicotine found in cigarettes, tobacco products, and even e-cig or vaping products on the market today. Quitting these products is not simply about willpower, but more so about treating the addiction to nicotine and finding ways to relearn how to live your life without the cigarettes and tobacco products.



What is Withdrawal?

The nicotine causes physical and mood-altering changes in your brain and body by increasing nicotine receptors which in turn are affected and produce a temporary reward or pleasure effect. When you decide to stop smoking or using tobacco, your body will begin to go through withdrawal. Here are some important points to remember:

- Withdrawal is the physiological (physical) response and symptoms you may experience when you stop smoking or chewing tobacco.
- Withdrawal symptoms typically peak in intensity within the first few days of quitting and can last for several weeks up to a month out from your quit day.
- They do, however, decrease in frequency and intensity over time, and
- Nicotine replacement therapy can also help with managing symptoms.

Common Withdrawal Symptoms:

- Depression
- Restlessness
- Increased appetite or weight gain
- Insomnia, trouble sleeping
- Decreased heart rate
- Shakiness, tremors
- Irritability, frustration or anger
- Headaches
- And of course, a craving for cigarettes
- Anxiety
- Constipation
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue

What are Cravings and Urges and why do I have them?

While withdrawal is the physical response to quitting tobacco, cravings and urges are a desire to return to smoking or tobacco use (relapse) after you quit. Cravings and urges are typically more frequent and more intense in the beginning but decrease over time; however, it is still possible to have cravings many years later. The reason for this is, the nicotine receptors that are left behind in your brain still remember the reward and pleasure associated with the use of tobacco. Linked behaviors and triggers can very easily remind you of the pleasure you got and trigger the urge because they are linked in your brain to that particular behavior.



- Dealing with triggers and cravings after quitting is normal, especially in the beginning.
- However, having cravings and urges can also be a warning sign that you need to be more cautious and more diligent to avoid slip ups and/or relapse.
- Remember, even though you no longer want to smoke or use tobacco, you may still have the desire to use because nicotine changes our brain and body.
- Most importantly, be patient with yourself and don't give up!

Creating a Quit Plan

Thinking ahead by setting a quit day and creating a quit plan, can help you prepare and learn key coping skills to help you avoid and overcome those cravings and triggers you have identified. Coping skills are things that you can do or repeat to yourself in order to keep your mind distracted and not think about chew or smoking. They are also essential in helping you with relapse prevention. The following are some examples you can try.

- **Identify** high-risk situations
- **Avoid** places where you are allowed to smoke or are tempted to smoke
- **Limit** your time around other smokers to avoid cravings and urges.
- **Avoid** or **limit** drinking alcohol
- **Alter** your routine/habits and environment that links you to your tobacco use
- **Stay busy** and keep yourself distracted or engaged in other activities

Keep in mind, quitting is a process. Encourage yourself to remain positive, and remind yourself of all the reasons why you decided to quit.