

## 7 Common Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms

### *And What You Can Do About Them!*



Trying to quit tobacco feels different for each person, but almost everyone will have some symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. This is a normal and temporary sign of recovery. Remember, nicotine withdrawal can't hurt you – unless you give in! The first 72 hours after quitting are usually the hardest. Over time, however, withdrawal symptoms will fade as long as you stay tobacco-free!

One of the best ways to manage nicotine withdrawal is to use quit-smoking medications like nicotine gum, patches, and lozenges. These medicines replace some of the nicotine you used to get from tobacco products. People who use quit-smoking medications are twice as likely to quit tobacco successfully. **Most Kentuckians can get nicotine patches or other quit-smoking medicines free through Quit Now Kentucky!**

- 1. Having urges or cravings to smoke:** Figuring out how to deal with cravings is one of the *most important* things you can do to stay successful. Remember why you are quitting. Remember that you never have to give in to a craving, and that it will always pass.
- 2. Feeling irritated or grouchy:** It is very common to feel irritated or grouchy when you quit. Remind yourself that you likely feel this way because your body is getting used to being without nicotine. Take a few deep breaths and remind yourself why you're quitting.
- 3. Feeling jumpy and restless:** Just like your mind gets irritated without nicotine at first, the rest of your body can, too. Physical activity can help shake loose your jumpiness. Get up and walk around for a bit if you feel restless.
- 4. Having a hard time concentrating:** You may notice that it is harder to concentrate in the first days after you quit. Cut yourself some slack, especially in the first days. Try to limit activities that require strong concentration if you can.
- 5. Having trouble sleeping:** This will get better over time but if you become exhausted from poor sleep, that can make it harder to stay quit. Caffeine lasts longer in your body after you quit tobacco, so don't drink caffeinated drinks in the late afternoon or evening. If you are using the nicotine patch, try taking it off an hour before bedtime.
- 6. Feeling hungrier:** It's normal for your appetite to increase some when you quit. Food may even taste better! Find some healthy, low-calorie foods that still give your mouth and hands something to do, like celery or sugar-free mints. You can also keep your hands and mouth busy with a toothpick or a straw. When you quit smoking, make a point of removing distractions when you eat. This can help you notice when you are getting full.
- 7. Feeling anxious, sad, or depressed:** Some people feel mood changes for a short time after they quit smoking. For some people, smoking may seem like it helps with anxiety or depression, but don't be tricked. Smoking might make you feel better in the short-term, but that's because the nicotine in cigarettes stops the feeling of withdrawal, not because it is helping with anxiety or depression. Once people have been tobacco-free for a few months, their anxiety and depression levels are often lower than when they used tobacco. Being physically active can help lift your mood. This can be hard to do if you're feeling down, but your efforts will pay off. Being in touch or talking with others every day can also help. Do things you enjoy. Even small things add up and help you feel better!

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*If you don't feel better in a couple of weeks, or your symptoms feel unmanageable, contact a healthcare provider. Remember, the quit-coaches at **1-800-QUIT-NOW** and [QuitNowKentucky.org](http://QuitNowKentucky.org) are available at no cost, 24/7, to help you manage cravings and quit tobacco successfully!*

## Benefits of Quitting Smoking

Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health. This is true regardless of your age or how long you have been smoking. After you smoke your last cigarette, your body begins a series of positive changes that continue for years.

Quitting smoking:

- Can add as much as 10 years to life expectancy
- Lowers risk of COPD
- Saves money in healthcare expenses
- Reduces coughing and shortness of breath
- Allows you to spend more time being 'present'
- Lowers risk of at least 12 types of cancer
- Saves you money in save cigarette costs
- Lowers risk of heart attack and stroke
- Makes things smell and taste better
- Lowers risk of delivering a low birth-weight baby

Some of these benefits begin within moments of quitting! Minutes after quitting, your heart rate will begin to drop. After 24 hours of being smoke-free, the nicotine level in your blood drops to zero. After a few days, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to the level of someone who doesn't smoke. After a year, shortness of breath and risk of heart attack will have decreased significantly. After five years, your risk of coronary heart disease, stroke, and some cancers drops by half. By the time you're 15 years smoke-free, your risk of coronary hart disease will be close to that of someone who doesn't smoke.

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*Get free, no-judgement help 24/7 to quit smoking, vaping, dipping, or using other tobacco products by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW, texting QUITNOW to 333888 or visiting [QuitNowKentucky.org](http://QuitNowKentucky.org). Talking to a quit-coach at [Quit Now Kentucky](http://Quit Now Kentucky) can double your chances of quitting successfully!*

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## 5 Tips for Quitting Tobacco Products

- 1. Consider quit-smoking medicines like nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges.** FDA-approved medicines like these can double your chances of quitting successfully. If you're already using these medicines but your urges are still hard to resist, you may be able to use more. For instance, if you are using a lower-dose patch, you may be able to increase to a higher dose or add nicotine gum. Talk to your healthcare provider or a quit-coach at 1-800-QUIT-NOW for help.
- 2. Make your environment work for you.** Get rid of all the cigarettes, lighters, and ashtrays in your home, in your car, and at work before you quit. Wash your clothes and anything else that smells like tobacco smoke. Tell people you're quitting so they can support you. Try to avoid situations where you will be tempted to smoke and where cigarettes and tobacco products are available. Secondhand smoke and seeing other people using tobacco can trigger cravings.
- 3. Distract yourself.** When you have an urge to smoke, vape, dip, or use other tobacco products, drown it out by paying attention to something more interesting, important, or just different. Listen to music, watch a video that makes you laugh, or call a friend. Urges fade rapidly, especially if you distract yourself!
- 4. Find safe substitutes for tobacco.** Things like toothpicks, straws, or cinnamon sticks can keep your mouth and hands busy. Paper clips, pencils for doodling, or a squeeze ball can all help with nervous energy, like when you're on the phone or watching TV.
- 5. Remember why you are quitting – and celebrate!** When you have an urge to use tobacco products, remember to take deep breaths and remind yourself why you're quitting and how far you've come. If you've made it through a holiday or stressful weekend without smoking, congratulate yourself! This boosts resistance to stress and craving. Even making it through your first 24 hours smoke-free is a big accomplishment.