WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS INFORMATION SHEET

Quitting tobacco use brings about a variety of physical and psychological withdrawal symptoms. For some people, coping with withdrawal symptoms is like riding a roller coaster—there can be sharp turns, slow climbs, and unexpected plunges. Most symptoms begin within the first 1 to 2 days, peak within the first week, and subside within 2 to 4 weeks. Report new symptoms to your health-care provider, especially if severe. Consider the impact of recent medication changes and your caffeine intake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPTOM</th>
<th>CAUSE</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>RELIEF</th>
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| Chest tightness              | Tightness is likely due to tension created by the body’s need for nicotine or may be caused by sore muscles from coughing. | A few days                    | ▪ Use relaxation techniques  
▪ Try deep breathing  
▪ Use of a nicotine medication might help |
| Constipation, stomach pain, gas | Intestinal movement decreases for a brief period.                          | 1–2 weeks                     | ▪ Drink plenty of fluids  
▪ Add fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain cereals to diet |
| Cough, dry throat, nasal drip | 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 |
| Craving for a cigarette      | Nicotine is a strongly addictive drug, and withdrawal causes cravings. | Frequent for 2–3 days; can happen for months or years | ▪ Wait out the urge, which lasts only a few minutes  
▪ Distract yourself  
▪ Exercise (take walks)  
▪ Use of a nicotine medication might help |
| Depressed mood               | It is normal to feel sad for a period of time after you first quit smoking. Many people have a strong urge to smoke when they feel depressed. | 1–2 weeks                     | ▪ Increase pleasurable activities  
▪ Talk with your clinician about changes in your mood when quitting  
▪ Get extra support from friends and family |
| Difficulty concentrating     | 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 |
| Dizziness                    | The body is getting extra oxygen.                                       | 1–2 days                      | ▪ Use extra caution  
▪ Change positions slowly  
▪ Take naps  
▪ Do not push yourself  
▪ Use of a nicotine medication might help |
| Fatigue                      | Nicotine is a stimulant.                                               | 2–4 weeks                     | ▪ Drink water or low-calorie liquids  
▪ Be prepared with low-calorie snacks |
| Hunger                       | Cravings for a cigarette can be confused with hunger pangs; sensation may result from oral cravings or the desire for something in the mouth. | Up to several weeks          | ▪ Reduce caffeine intake by about half (and none after lunchtime, to improve sleep), because its effects will increase with quitting smoking  
▪ Use relaxation techniques |
| Insomnia                     | Nicotine affects brain wave function and influences sleep patterns; coughing and dreams about smoking are common. | 1 week                        | ▪ Reduce caffeine intake by about half (and none after lunchtime, to improve sleep), because its effects will increase with quitting smoking  
▪ Use relaxation techniques |
| Irritability                 | The body’s craving for nicotine can produce irritability.                | 2–4 weeks                     | ▪ Take walks  
▪ Try hot baths  
▪ Use relaxation techniques |

Adapted from materials from the National Cancer Institute.