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        | Your lungs are undergoing changes, and your body is tense because it is craving nicotine. It also might be caused by sore muscles from coughing. | Can last several weeks                                                   | ▪ Use relaxation techniques  
 ▪ Try deep breathing  
 ▪ Use of a nicotine medication might help |
| Constipation, stomach pain, gas | Intestinal movement decreases.                                         | Can last several weeks                                                   | ▪ Drink plenty of fluids  
 ▪ Add fruits, vegetables, and whole-grain cereals to diet |
| Cough, sore throat     | The body is getting rid of accumulated mucus in the airways.           | Variable                                                                 | ▪ Drink plenty of fluids  
 ▪ Attempt to avoid additional stress during first few weeks |
| Craving for a cigarette | Nicotine is a strongly addictive drug, and withdrawal causes cravings. | Frequent for first 2–3 days; can happen for months or years              | ▪ Wait out the urge, which lasts only a few minutes  
 ▪ Exercise (take walks)  
 ▪ Use of a nicotine medication might help |
| Depressed mood         | It is common 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. | Can last weeks, but typically subsides after a month                     | ▪ 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. | Can last several weeks                                                   | ▪ Plan workload accordingly  
 ▪ Attempt to avoid additional stress during first few weeks |
| Dizziness              | The body is getting extra oxygen.                                       | Typically subsides within a couple of weeks                                | ▪ Use extra caution  
 ▪ Change positions slowly |
| Hunger                 | Cravings for a cigarette can be confused with hunger pangs; sensation can result from oral cravings or the desire for something in the mouth. | Variable; weeks to months                                                | ▪ Drink water or low-calorie liquids  
 ▪ Be prepared with low-calorie snacks |
| Insomnia               | Nicotine affects brain wave function and influences sleep patterns; coughing and dreams about smoking are common. | Variable; weeks to months                                                | ▪ 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.               | Can last several weeks but typically subsides with 4 weeks               | ▪ Take walks  
 ▪ Try hot baths  
 ▪ Use relaxation techniques |

Adapted from materials from the National Cancer Institute.

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