

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.

SYMPTOM	CAUSE	DURATION	RELIEF
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use relaxation techniques ▪ Try deep breathing ▪ Use of a nicotine medication might help
Constipation, stomach pain, gas	Intestinal movement decreases.	Can last several weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take walks ▪ Try hot baths ▪ Use relaxation techniques

Adapted from materials from the National Cancer Institute.