

# Withdrawal Symptoms

## **But what symptoms can I expect? Why do they happen?**

Here's a list of the most common withdrawal symptoms. Get familiar with this list and come up with ways to cope:

### **Headaches**

About one quarter of quitters report a mild headache at some time during the process of quitting.

**How long will this last?** These headaches may occur during the first week to two weeks after quitting. A headache may last a day, go away, and return a week later.

**Tips to help:** Take a warm bath or shower. Cut down on caffeine and colas. Try relaxation or meditation techniques.

### **Constipation**

The movement of your bowels may decrease for three or four days when you reduce your tobacco consumption.

**How long will this last?** This may occur in the first few weeks after quitting and last three to four days.

**Tips to help:** Eat lots of fiber, like raw fruits, vegetables, bran and cereal. Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day and try to exercise regularly.

### **Coughing**

If you were a smoker, the cilia (the little "hairs" in your lungs) come back to life after you quit and begin to rebuild. They start to clean the bronchial tubes and remove the mucous, often resulting in occasional coughs. This cleaning improves your breathing and helps get rid of your smoker's cough. It's great news because it means your lungs are healing!

If you are quitting chewing tobacco and you find yourself coughing, it may be due to the fact that you may have decreased lubrication of your throat (some chewers drink water or fruit juice as they chew), so your throat may be dry. However, we suggest that if your coughing persists you immediately visit your doctor as tobacco use can "mask" other conditions that may be affecting you.

**How long will this last?** The first few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Try drinking cold water, hot tea, fruit juice, chew sugar-free gum or have cough drops or sugar-free candy.

### **Sore or dry throat**

When you quit smoking or chew you may experience a sore or dry throat. This is a sign that your body is getting used to having less mucous. Smokers produce a lot of mucous to protect the airways from the toxins in cigarette smoke. Now, your body doesn't need it anymore.

If you're quitting chew or dip you're probably used to keeping your mouth lubricated, either by constantly spitting tobacco in a cup or by drinking water, soda or juice, while you chew.

**How long will this last?** First few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Sip ice-cold water or hot tea, chew sugar-free gum or have cough drops or sugar-free candy. Carry bottled water with you at all times.

### **Sore scalp**

Some people find the surface of their scalp is very sensitive for a few days. Even touching or combing your hair can be painful. This can be attributed to the blood pressure change as general circulation improves.

**How long will this last?** First few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Be sure to gently comb and brush your hair. If possible, do not use a hair dryer or pull your hair back while your scalp is sore.

### **Nervousness**

Chemicals in tobacco smoke affect your entire central nervous system. Because these chemicals have been messing with your nervous system, quitting can cause a feeling of nervousness, which sometimes lasts for a few days. And, when your central nervous system gets back in line, you may find that you have a keener sense of smell, taste, hearing, color and depth perception.

**How long will this last?** The first few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Reassure yourself that it is just part of the healing process. Check your Coping Plan in your Quit Centre. What helps you relax?

### **Occasional dizziness**

If you were a smoker, after you quit you'll be absorbing more oxygen through your lungs than your body has been accustomed to. The dizziness may come once or twice a day for a few days. It usually lasts only one or two seconds, and is gone before you have time to do anything about it.

If you were a chewer, you may also be absorbing more oxygen through your lungs as you are breathing freer with no obstructions in your mouth (chew).

**How long will this last?** The first few days after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Take extra caution in the things that you do, such as standing up slowly. Visit your doctor if your dizziness persists as tobacco use can often 'mask' other existing medical conditions.

### **Hunger**

Almost all quitters notice this. You may tend to eat more than you used to. Your body's absorption of food is improved as well, so you will gain more nourishment (even if you don't eat more).

**How long will this last?** The first few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Try fresh fruit and vegetables or drinking water or tea.

### **Tremor and Perspiration**

Your hands and fingers may tremble slightly. However, the tremor is usually minor, and will subside as your body gets used to not depending on tobacco. You may also experience increased perspiration.

**How long will this last?** The first few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Warm baths or showers can help dispel both the perspiration and the tremor. If you are concerned, consult your doctor to determine whether it is severe enough to warrant medication.

### **Sleep pattern disturbances**

Some quitters complain that they find it difficult to sleep as long as they used to when they quit or cut down their tobacco use. Two things can cause this:

If you were a smoker, your sleep may have been interrupted by constant coughing and/or difficulty breathing. When you stop smoking, your body gets healthier and the sleep you get is more restful. So if you wake up suddenly at 5:00 a.m., you may think you are a victim of insomnia. You're probably not! Your body has probably had all the sleep it needs.

When your body stops depending on tobacco you start to regain energy; so often smokers and chewers begin to need fewer hours of sleep after quitting.

Using the nicotine patch can also affect your sleep. You could experience vivid dreams which some people find disturbing or it is possible that you may wake up with cravings.

**How long will this last?** The first few days after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Relaxation or deep breathing exercises may help. Reducing caffeine intake and increasing your activity level can also help.

If using the nicotine patch you may need to talk to your pharmacist or doctor about making sure you have the right dose. It may mean removing the patch at night or even changing to a stronger dose of patch depending on your symptoms.

### **Feeling Tired or Depressed**

Quitting smoking can make you feel tired, slightly depressed or down. This is because nicotine is a stimulant.

**How long will this last?** The first week or two of quitting.

**Tips to Help:** Taking frequent naps may help. Increasing your daily exercise or joining a counseling or support group may also help. If depression is strong or you have a history of depression see your doctor. You may need to talk about medications or other support.

### **Mouth sores or blisters**

A small number of smokers experience mouth irritations when they cut down or quit smoking. The cause is related to chemical adjustments that are taking place in your mouth. For years your mouth has had to withstand repeated assaults with hot cigarette smoke. Your tissues are adjusting and healing.

Chewers need to pay special attention to mouth sores and blisters. One study estimates that more than 50% of regular smokeless tobacco users have at least a degree 1 early-stage leukoplakia (an abnormal condition in which thickened white patches of epithelium occur on the mucous membranes ) lesion. Another study of dental patients revealed that 78% of smokeless tobacco users had detectable oral lesions.

**How long will this last?** First few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Use topical treatment for mouth sores. If you experience sores for longer than a few weeks, consult your doctor. If you have a severe sore, consult your doctor or dentist immediately.

### **Feeling "spaced out" or lack of concentration**

This indistinct but annoying symptom is linked with carbon monoxide withdrawal. It gives a sense of being

in "another dimension." It can include changes in distance and space perception, a floating feeling, and a total lack of concentration. Remember that carbon monoxide is a deadly poison - it is a good thing to get out of your system.

**How long will this last?** First few weeks after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Plan your workload to account for your temporary lack of concentration. Avoid additional stress during the first few weeks.

### **Weight Gain**

Not everyone gains weight after quitting. Some people do, but usually only five or six pounds. Two things seem to cause this weight gain. First, your body metabolism slows down when you quit, so you don't need as much food as when you were smoking or chewing. Second, you may use food to replace tobacco consumption and end up eating a bit more than before.

**How long will this last?** The first two weeks to two months after quitting.

**Tips to help:** Eat healthy, tasty, well-balanced meals as much as possible. Avoid fad diets. Since food may taste better after you quit, you may want bigger helpings. Try to eat the same amount as usual. Eat fresh, healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables or low-fat crackers instead of fast food, donuts, candy, or potato chips.