



STOP SMOKING FOR BETTER HEALTH— TAKE THE FIRST STEP TODAY

HUMAN RESOURCES - WORKPLACE WELLNESS

READY TO QUIT SMOKING?

Whether you have decided to quit next week, next month or next year, being prepared is the first step towards becoming smoke-free. Quitting is difficult, but you can enhance your chances of success by preparing yourself for the quit journey. This information sheet explores common triggers, withdrawal symptoms as well as strategies for managing cravings. It also outlines some of the common nicotine replacement therapies and community resources to support you in your journey.

EMOTIONAL, PATTERN AND SOCIAL TRIGGERS

Quitting smoking can be challenging in part because of the many activities, places, people and feelings that signal to you to want to smoke.



Triggers differ from person to person. Some examples of pattern triggers include drinking coffee, drinking alcoholic beverages, watching TV, taking a break at work, driving and inactivity. There are also many emotional triggers such as feeling stressed, bored, lonely or anxious, and social triggers such as occasions that typically include other people who smoke.

In order to be successful in your smoke-free journey it is important that you know your triggers and how to best manage them.

Trigger	Suggested Coping Mechanism
Alcohol	If you are used to reaching for a cigarette with your alcoholic beverage, try avoiding alcohol during the early stages of your quitting process. Alternatively, decrease alcohol consumption in a social setting by alternating it with non-alcoholic beverages.
Coffee	Instead of coffee, consider switching to tea, juice or water. Coffee can also contribute to feeling anxious and jittery thus pushing you towards picking up a cigarette for a relief.
Stress	If you turn to smoking as a way of dealing with stress, before reaching for a cigarette, try other coping strategies such as yoga, meditation or breathing techniques to help you relax. You may also want to incorporate physical activity into your daily routine, such as going for a walk or any other form of exercise you enjoy. It is also important that you get enough quality sleep.
Inactivity and boredom	Keep busy. Try a new hobby, catch-up on some light reading or your favourite TV shows. Go for walks, or engage in other physical activity, connect with friends and loved ones.
Driving	To help you avoid smoking while driving, remove all the reminders of it from your car. Clean the upholstery, get rid of ashtrays, lighters, hidden packs of cigarettes, and any other items in your car that you may associate with smoking.
Socializing with friends/colleagues who smoke	If you are accustomed to joining your friends for a smoke during your free time, as you begin your quitting journey, try shifting your social activities to areas where smoking is prohibited to help you resist the temptation.



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WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Nicotine releases chemicals in the brain that create a euphoric feeling that is common to addictive drugs. This euphoric feeling is the primary driver for the addiction. Your brain and your body become used to the effects of nicotine which typically leads to smoking more often to avoid withdrawal symptoms. During times of withdrawal, you will experience symptoms such as tiredness, irritability and hunger. These symptoms produce cravings for nicotine. Withdrawal triggers include:

- Craving the taste of a cigarette
- Smelling cigarette smoke
- Handling cigarettes, lighters and matches
- Needing to do something with your hands and mouth

Below are some strategies that may help you cope with withdrawal symptoms, triggers and cravings:

1. DISTRACT YOURSELF

Find something to take your mind off the craving. Hold off from taking that cigarette; the craving normally does not last long. Tell yourself that you can wait a few minutes for that cigarette; while waiting, distract yourself with an activity like calling a friend, doing a good deed for a neighbour or family member, going for a walk or engaging in exercise. Physical activity can help you boost your energy while beating the craving.

2. REMEMBER SAVINGS

Remind yourself of the reasons why you want to quit and what you are going to do

with the money that you are saving. This can be a powerful motivator.

3. CALL A FRIEND

Call or text someone in your support system. Remind yourself that you do not have to do this alone.

5. KEEP YOUR MOUTH BUSY

Chew a stick of gum or hard candy instead of picking up a cigarette.

6. DRINK WATER THROUGH A STRAW

Using a straw can help with managing the craving as it tricks your brain into thinking that you have a cigarette in your mouth as the shape of the straw resembles that of the cigarette. In addition, water also helps to rid the system of nicotine and other harmful chemicals.

7. CHANGE THE ROUTINE

Change the routine that you associate with smoking; this may help you with your craving.

8. LISTEN TO YOUR FAVOURITE MUSIC

This might put you in a different state of mind.

9. TAKE SLOW, DEEP BREATHS

Sometimes, due to stress and anxiety, we take shallow breaths. By taking a deep breath we increase the oxygen saturation in our blood which should make you feel better. To help you breathe through your craving, inhale through your nose and

exhale through your mouth, repeat this 10 times or until you feel more relaxed.

10. GO TO A PARK

Go to an area where you cannot smoke such as a nearby park, mall, movie theatre, etc.

11. JOIN A SUPPORT GROUP

Join a support group and/or try nicotine replacement therapy

At times, it may be hard to cope with the symptoms and cravings, but it is important to remember that such experiences are normal and are a part of the quitting process. Quitting smoking is not easy, do not give up. Keep trying different things to manage your triggers and cravings until you find what works for you.

USING NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPIES

Some people use quit smoking medications to help them reduce the withdrawal symptoms and cigarette cravings. Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) have been designed to help in weaning off nicotine. NRTs are alternative sources of nicotine recommended to move away from the dependence. Attempts to quit are twice as effective with rather than without replacement therapies or medical assistance (smokefree.gov). NRTs come in many forms that are used in different ways. Below is an overview of the 5 most common types of NRT. Talk to your healthcare professional about which therapy may be the best for you.



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NRT #1 Patch

- Applied to the skin
- Delivers a certain dose of nicotine that is slowly absorbed by your body
- Helps to reduce cravings and alleviate withdrawal symptoms
- Recommended to be used as soon as you stop smoking

NRT #2 Inhaler

- A plastic cylinder that resembles a cigarette. Not to be confused with an e-cigarette
- It is designed to be puffed like a cigarette while releasing nicotine vapor. The vapor is not intended to be inhaled in the lungs like a cigarette; it should be kept in the mouth to be absorbed through the mouth's lining

NRT #3 Oral Spray

- Spray that instantly releases nicotine vapor into the mouth
- It is not recommended to inhale while spraying as the nicotine needs to be absorbed in the mouth.

NRT #4 Gum

- The nicotine gum provides a small dose of nicotine without other harmful chemicals associated with smoking.
- It resembles an ordinary gum but if chewed excessively like a regular gum, will produce an incorrect amount of nicotine.
- The proper way to use nicotine gum is to chew the gum a few times then park it

against the cheek; this is called the “bite and park” technique. Do this for 20 to 30 minutes.

NRT #5 Lozenge

- Hard candy that slowly releases nicotine
- Unlike regular hard candies, the lozenge should be sucked until a strong flavor is released then parked against the cheek similarly to the gum.

NRT will not completely eliminate the urge to smoke but when combined with other craving/trigger management strategies they can improve your chances of success. Think about other options such as counselling, online tools and support groups. (Canadian Cancer Society, 2013)

IF YOU EXPERIENCE A SLIP OR FALL DURING YOUR JOURNEY

Slips and falls are common and normal in the quitting journey. A slip is an occurrence of smoking one cigarette or taking a puff due to a moment of weakness after a quit day, while falls (relapses) are times when individuals return to smoking after a quitting interval.

Slips

Slips may happen at any time and it is common to have a slip in the quitting process. Do not be disheartened by it and remind yourself that you have had a temporary setback. See the slip as a learning experience rather than as a failure. Reflecting on what caused the slip may help you avoid it in the future. The following questions may help you to reflect on the experience:

- What caused me to have a cigarette or a puff?
- Where was I at that moment?
- Who was I with?
- What could I do in the future to avoid/manage this situation?

Falls

Do not let a relapse discourage you. Write down how long you were smoke-free, think about what you learned when you were not smoking, what helped you to stay smoke-free and celebrate the milestones achieved. Reflect on what caused you to have a fall and what you may be able to do differently to help yourself be smoke-free again. Create a quit plan and give it another try.

Remember that quitting is a gradual process that can take many attempts before you succeed. Prepare for the challenges that may lay ahead and get the supports that will help you reach your goal.

COMMUNITY SUPPORTS

The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU) provides many supports to individuals who want to quit smoking. Visit wechu.org/smoking-and-vaping/quit-smoking to learn about the many supports provided by WECHU and other community organizations including quit medications, one-one one counselling, group sessions, phone and online quit programs

Quitting smoking can have significant positive effects not only on your health but also on the wellbeing of others around you. For more information, or for a listing of the sources consulted to write this publication, please visit:

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