

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Symptom	Cause	Duration	Relief
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use relaxation techniques • Try deep breathing • Use of NRT may help
Constipation, stomach pain, gas	Intestinal movement decreases for a brief period.	1 - 2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait out the urge, which lasts only a few minutes • Distract yourself • Exercise (take walks) • Use of a nicotine medication may 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	<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.	A few weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan workload accordingly • Avoid additional stress during first few weeks
Dizziness	The body is getting extra oxygen.	1 - 2 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use extra caution • Change positions slowly
Fatigue	Nicotine is a stimulant.	2 - 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take naps • Do not push yourself • Use of a nicotine medication may help
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	<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.	1 week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit caffeine intake (and none after noon), because its effects will increase with quitting smoking • Use relaxation techniques
Irritability	The body's craving for nicotine can produce irritability.	2 - 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take walks • Try hot baths • Use relaxation techniques

Adapted from materials from the National Cancer Institute

