

Tobacco Use Disorder

Smoking, dipping, or chewing tobacco regularly makes quitting increasingly tricky. What may seem like a casual, relaxing habit can quickly turn into a serious and expensive use disorder that severely affects health. Protect your health by educating yourself on treatment and recovery options for tobacco use disorder.

Understanding Tobacco's Effects

Cigarettes, cigars, pipes, and all tobacco varieties, including smokeless, contain nicotine, a powerful stimulant. According to a U.S. Surgeon General's report, nicotine is more habit-forming than any other drug, including heroin, cocaine, marijuana, and opium. Nicotine acts on the brain's pleasure centers, producing a rush of adrenaline. It promotes relaxation, suppresses appetite, and boosts mental alertness. Tobacco use stimulates the adrenal glands, causing hormone secretions that temporarily boost blood pressure and heart rate, causing the heart to work harder.

Smoking causes more than 4,000 substances to enter the lungs and bloodstream, and more than 60 of those substances can cause cancer. These include carbon monoxide, ammonia gas, arsenic, and cyanide. Carbon monoxide binds to the blood when inhaled, decreasing the amount of oxygen available to tissues. The lungs retain up to 90 percent of these inhaled compounds. Over time, smoking damages the functioning of the cilia, the tiny, hair-like structures that clear foreign particles from the lungs, allowing cancer-causing tar to accumulate on the lining of respiratory tissues.

Snuff and chewing tobacco can be just as hazardous as smoking tobacco. Smokeless tobacco mixes with saliva, allowing the nicotine to absorb through mouth tissues into the bloodstream. Consequently, mouth cancer (on the cheek, gum, lip, and tongue tissues, in particular) is more likely to develop due to the usage of smokeless tobacco, snuff, and chewing tobacco than cigarette or cigar use.

Dangers of Tobacco Use

- Cancer: lung, oral (including lip, mouth and tongue), pharyngeal, laryngeal, esophageal and pancreatic
- Respiratory disease: emphysema, bronchitis and pneumonia
- Cardiovascular disease: coronary heart disease, heart attacks, stroke and subarachnoid hemorrhage
- Female problems: low birthweight in infants, premature menopause and hip fractures
- Duodenal, gastric and peptic ulcers
- Gum and tooth disease
- Peripheral vascular disease
- Bone loss, breaks and sprains
- Wound-healing problems.

Statistics About Tobacco

Consider the following facts:

- Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease, disability, and death in the United States.
- An estimated 28.3 million U.S. adults smoke cigarettes, and about 2.80 million U.S. middle and high school students use at least one tobacco product, including e-cigarettes.
- Each year, nearly half a million Americans die prematurely of smoking or exposure to secondhand smoke
- Tobacco product use is started and established primarily during adolescence

Recovering From Tobacco Use Disorder

The benefits of recovering from a tobacco use disorder include:

- Healthier blood pressure and pulse rate
- Increase in blood-oxygen levels
- A decline in blood carbon-monoxide levels
- Improvement in sense of taste and smell
- Improvement in oral health and breath quality
- A 50 percent reduction in the risk of mouth, throat, and esophageal cancers after five years of tobacco avoidance
- A 50 percent reduction in the risk of lung cancer after ten years of tobacco avoidance
- Reduction of the risk of stroke to pre-tobacco use disorder levels after five to 15 years of tobacco avoidance
- Reduction of the risk of death to roughly the level of individuals who never consumed tobacco after 15 years of tobacco avoidance
- Significantly lower life insurance costs

Self-Help Recovery Methods

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, ninety percent of individuals who recovered from a tobacco use disorder employed a self-help strategy.

Going "cold turkey" or avoiding tobacco products altogether is a popular self-help strategy. It is important to know that going cold turkey can produce varying withdrawal symptoms, and many of these symptoms can be treated by your doctor, including:

- Physical cravings for cigarettes or smokeless tobacco
- Irritability
- Nervousness
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Sleeping problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Hunger
- Weight gain

An alternative to going cold turkey is a gradual cessation approach in which tobacco use is cut down a little bit each day, with a target date of complete avoidance planned. Research shows that gradual quitting works better than cold turkey.

Professional Help

There is nothing wrong or embarrassing about seeking help for a tobacco use disorder. A physician or therapist can recommend treatment options. Some of these include a clinic-based tobacco-cessation program (e.g., Smoke Stoppers, SmokEnders), medications that curb the habit-forming properties of tobacco (e.g., the "nicotine patch"), individual or group counseling, and support groups. Whether going it alone or benefiting from professional help, supplementing with various smoking-cessation tools has proven effective. Consider these aids in your cessation attempt, but talk to your doctor about each option first:

- Over-the-counter nicotine gum
- Nicotine-reduction filters
- Hypnosis tapes
- Acupuncture
- Self-help books.

Under the ACA, tobacco cessation is included as a required preventive service with no copay. Since 2014 the law has placed the financial responsibility for providing tobacco cessation treatment on the insurer or health plan, at no cost to the patient.

Quitting Tips

The following are suggestions offered by individuals who have recovered from tobacco use disorder:

- **Alter your routines:** If you normally smoke while reading the newspaper or after a lunch break, listen to the news on the radio or go for a walk instead.
- **Start an exercise program:** Not only can you improve your physical fitness and help your body heal from the effects of smoking, but you will also be preoccupied with a new routine.
- **Explore healthier alternatives:** Chew gum instead of smokeless tobacco. Reach for low-fat, healthy snacks like carrot sticks instead of reaching for cigarettes, and drink plenty of low-calorie beverages, especially water.
- **Avoid tempting situations:** Keep your distance from bars, smoking lounges, and friends and family who use tobacco regularly. Stay very active during your first week of tobacco avoidance by planning a busy week filled with fun, distracting activities.

Resources

- American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): www.cdc.gov/tobacco/index.htm
- SmokeFree.gov: www.smokefree.gov

Here when you need us.

Call: 844-207-5465

Online: guidanceresources.com

App: GuidanceNowSM

Web ID: LivingME

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