

Nicotine Dependence, Relapse and Quitting Smoking

Nicotine Dependence

- Nicotine is highly addictive, similar to heroin, cocaine, and alcohol.¹
- The most common form of chemical dependence in the U.S. is nicotine dependence.²
- 20.6% of adults in the United States are smokers—46.6 million people.³
- Over half of all living adults who have a history of smoking have successfully quit.⁴
- Smokers with anxiety diagnoses have higher levels of nicotine dependence and increased withdrawal symptoms after quitting.⁵
- People who are highly nicotine dependent smoke more than 20 cigarettes daily and smoke within the first half hour of waking up in the morning.⁶
- Research suggests that various factors may contribute to nicotine dependence, including psychosocial, biologic and genetic factors.⁷
- When smokers try to quit, they can experience withdrawal symptoms, including irritability, frustration, anger, anxiety, increased appetite, and difficulty concentrating.⁸
- Withdrawal symptoms peak within the first 1-2 days after quitting and gradually decline over time.⁸
- Many things trigger the need to smoke, including places, feelings, moods, or activities.⁹

Relapse

- Nicotine dependence is a chronic condition that usually requires repeated interventions.⁶
- On average, smokers make between 8-11 quit attempts before successfully quitting.¹⁰
- Most untreated smokers relapse within eight days after trying to quit:¹¹
 - 24-51% are abstinent at one week
 - 15-28% are abstinent at one month
 - 10-20% are abstinent at 3 months
- Smokers, especially women, relapse because of a fear of weight gain.⁶

Quitting Smoking

- Most adult smokers, about 70%, want to quit smoking.¹²
- In 2010, 55% of smokers tried to quit for more than one day.¹³
- The chance of successfully quitting smoking increases with every attempt.¹⁴
- If a smoker's spouse or partner quits, they are five times more likely to quit.¹⁵
- At any given time, about 10% of smokers plan to quit within the next month, 30% think about quitting within the next six months, 30% think about quitting at some point, and 30% are not planning to quit.¹⁶
- One-third of all smokers who succeed in quitting use treatment to do so.¹⁷
- Combining smoking cessation medications and counseling significantly increases abstinence rates.⁶

*Factors that make quitting smoking challenging:*⁶

- High stress levels
- Living with other smokers
- Lack of knowledge regarding effective cessation treatments
- Lack of access to cessation treatments
- High nicotine dependence
- Having a diagnosed mental health condition

*Key elements to successfully quitting smoking:*⁶

- Motivation to quit
- Confidence in ability
- Readiness to quit
- Social support
- Support from healthcare providers
- Supportive environment, including smoke-free homes and workplaces
- Access to and use of cessation treatments, including medications and counseling

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