

Coping with Physical Withdrawal Symptoms of Nicotine

If you are a daily smoker, you have been taking the drug nicotine into your body every day – probably for years. Your body has become accustomed to getting regular amounts of nicotine and so there will be a period of adjustment when the dose of nicotine is lowered or eliminated. In addition to the emotional loss of your cigarettes, there will be physical symptoms that can last for days or even weeks. The trick is not to give in and the symptoms will gradually go away. The symptoms are entirely normal and very temporary.

Using a nicotine medication – like the patch or gum – lets you reduce the nicotine you get slowly over time and prevents the sudden jolt of all or nothing. These drugs are called nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs). A better name would be nicotine reduction therapies, because they really are not designed to replace the nicotine forever. After all, the ultimate goal for any ex-smoker is to be 100% nicotine-free.

Symptoms	Reason	Duration	Relief
Tiredness, fatigue	Nicotine is a stimulant	2-4 weeks	Get more sleep, take naps
Difficulty sleeping	Nicotine affected brain waves	2-4 weeks	Avoid caffeine after 6 PM
Cough, nasal drip	Body is getting rid of excess mucus	A few days	Drink plenty of liquids
Dizziness	Body is getting extra oxygen	1-2 days	Change positions slowly
Constipation, gas	There's decreased intestinal movement	1-2 wks	Add fiber to diet
Hunger	Nicotine takes the edge off appetite	Several weeks	Eat low calorie snacks
Headaches	Body is getting extra oxygen	1-2 weeks	Drink extra water, relax more