

Nicotine dependence, relapse, and quitting smoking

Quick Facts

- Currently 43.4 million adults smoke, about 20% of the U.S. population.¹
- Over half of all living adults who have a history of smoking have successfully quit.¹
- Most adult smokers, about 70%, want to quit.²
- At any given time, about 10% of smokers plan to quit within the next month, 30% think about quitting within the next 6 months, 30% think about quitting at some point, and 30% are not planning to quit.³
- Only 4-7% of adults who quit smoking without using treatment, i.e. “cold turkey,” are successful.⁴

Nicotine Dependence

- Nicotine is highly addictive, equal to heroin, cocaine, and alcohol.⁵
- When smokers try to quit, they can experience withdrawal symptoms, including irritability, frustration, anger, anxiety, increased appetite, and difficulty concentrating.⁶
- Withdrawal symptoms peak within the first 1-2 days after quitting and gradually decline over time.⁶
- Many things trigger the need to smoke, including places, feelings, moods, or activities.⁷
- 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.⁴

Relapse

- Nicotine dependence is a chronic condition that usually requires repeated interventions.⁴
- About 40% of smokers try to quit every year.⁸
- Most smokers try to quit without using recommended cessation methods.⁴
- Most untreated smokers relapse within 8 days after trying to quit.⁹
 - 24-51% are abstinent at one week
 - 15-28% are abstinent at one month
 - 10-20% are abstinent at 3 months

Quitting Smoking

- One-third of all smokers who succeed in quitting use treatment to do so.¹⁰
- Using smoking cessation medications increases quit rates by 1.5 to 2.7 times.¹¹
- Behavioral therapy and counseling increases quit rates by 1.5 to 2.1 times.¹²
- The chance of successfully quitting smoking increases with every attempt.¹¹

Factors that make quitting more challenging⁴

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

Keys to successfully quitting⁴

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

To learn more about smoking cessation, visit www.workshifts.org.

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