

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Listed below are symptoms of withdrawal that may last a few days or weeks after quitting tobacco use, with suggestions on how to handle them. The peak of withdrawal symptoms usually occurs approximately 24 to 48 hours after quitting. REMEMBER that they are normal and temporary.

You May Feel:	Why It May Happen:	What To Do About It:
Irritable, nervous, anxious, grumpy	Withdrawal from nicotine	Take a brisk walk, exercise, call a friend, avoid stressful situations, try a deep breathing exercise, get enough rest, take a hot bath, drink water and fruit juices.
Unable to concentrate, less efficient, impaired speech, lack of coordination, feeling spaced out or in a fog	Withdrawal from carbon monoxide (poisonous gas) and nicotine	Don't expect too much of yourself – especially the first three days. Try a deep breathing exercise, take a walk, plan work load to try to avoid stress during the first few weeks. Be careful using equipment or driving. Take time off, if necessary.
Lightheaded, dizzy, feeling overstimulated	More oxygen in the blood instead of carbon monoxide	Sit down and relax, take extra caution, change positions slowly.
Sleepy, weak, no energy	No more nicotine stimulation	Try to get more sleep, take a nap, try a deep breathing exercise, try not to push yourself, take it easy.
Insomnia or other sleep disturbances	Change in daily routine, body may need less sleep	Avoid caffeine after 6:00PM, use more energy during the day by getting more exercise, try a deep breathing exercise before bed, take a warm bath.
Hungry	Nicotine artificially suppresses appetite	Try not to eat more or eat low-calorie snacks like fresh fruits and vegetables (apples, carrot sticks), and low fat popcorn. Exercise, take a walk, drink water.
Increased coughing	Excess mucous and tar in the lungs being cleared out	Drink plenty of fluids, chew sugarless gum, try cough drops or sugarless hard candy.
Constipated	Decreased intestinal activity	Include fiber or roughage foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and bran in your diet. Drink six to eight glasses of water each day, exercise, walk.
Headache	Better circulation sends more blood to the brain	Use over-the-counter pain relievers, take a warm bath or shower, use cold compresses, lie down and relax.
Irritated or itchy scalp, hands and/or feet	Better blood circulation to your extremities	Massage the area, use lotion on itchy hands and feet.
Tremors, shaky	Nicotine withdrawal	Sit down, tense and relax muscles.
Sweaty	Body's way of flushing out nicotine	Drink water, wear lighter clothing, take more showers.
Increased need to urinate	Body's way of getting rid of nicotine or may be from drinking more fluids	Take regular breaks at work, make frequent stops when traveling.
Dry mouth or tongue, sore throat or gums	Numbness from tobacco smoke wearing off, throat is healing	Sip ice-cold water or fruit juice, use mouthwash or oral antiseptics, chew sugarless gum.

Adapted from "For You and Your Family – a Guide for Perinatal Trainers and Providers." California Dept. of Health Services, Tobacco Control Section, 1991.