

Physical effects of quitting tobacco use

SYMPTOM: Increased cough

Cause: Your lungs have started to clean themselves. The “brushes” in your airways are working to sweep out tar and particles, as well as the extra mucous your body has made to protect the airways. This effect usually lasts for a few days to a week. If your cough lasts longer, see your doctor.

What to do:

- Drink more liquids (water and fruit juices) to soothe your cough.
- Use cough drops only if needed.

SYMPTOM: Headache

Cause: Your body is used to certain levels of nicotine, and now those levels are dropping. You may also be feeling more stress than usual.

What to do:

- Use deep breathing to relax.
- Try to get extra rest.
- Use pain relievers as little as possible, and don't take it on an empty stomach.

SYMPTOM: Difficulty concentrating

Cause: Your body isn't getting the nicotine it's used to, and you may be feeling higher stress than usual.

What to do:

- Do more physical activities.
- Try deep breathing to get more oxygen to the brain.
- Avoid alcohol.

SYMPTOM: Dry or sore throat

Cause: Tobacco bothers the throat, but numbs it at the same time. Quitting prevents new soreness, but it also stops the numbing of old soreness.

What to do:

- Drink liquids like orange juice and water.
- Use throat sprays or cough drops only if needed.



SYMPTOM: Feeling nervous or touchy

Cause: Your body is craving nicotine, which is now leaving your system.

What to do:

- Drink lots of water and fruit juices to “flush” nicotine and other chemicals from your system.

SYMPTOM: Constipation

Cause: Nicotine moves food through the digestive system quickly. The movement of food may slow down until the body gets used to working without nicotine.

What to do:

- Increase liquids and fibre in your diet as soon as possible.
- Eat more vegetables, fresh fruit, prunes, and bran every day until the symptom goes away. This will help food move through the digestive system the natural way.

SYMPTOM: Tiredness

Cause: Your body is losing nicotine. Nicotine is an “upper,” so it’s not a surprise that most quitters feel tired at first.

What to do:

- Try to get a little extra sleep and do more physical activities.

