

Quitting Smoking

Ways to Ride Out Tobacco Cravings

When you are trying to quit smoking or chew tobacco, cravings can wear you down. Here are some tips to help you remain in control and stay smoke-free.

- 1. Delay.** If you feel the urge to smoke, remind yourself that you must wait 10 minutes and then distract yourself by doing something else. Sidestepping the urge may be enough to stop you from giving in to that cigarette. Repeat as often as needed. The craving will soon stop whether you smoke a cigarette or not.
- 2. Don't have 'just one.'** The urge may be so strong that you are tempted to have a cigarette just to stop the craving. Don't be fooled into thinking that you will stop at just one. More often than not, having one cigarette leads to another—and you may end up back in the habit.
- 3. Avoid triggers.** Tobacco cravings are often the strongest in situations when you have regularly smoked or chewed tobacco. Identify your trigger locations—or people—and have a plan to avoid them completely or to manage around them without giving in to tobacco use.
- 4. Make a plan/Change up your routine.** Make a plan for how you will continue to remain smoke-free. Empty and remove ashtrays. Ask family/friends who smoke to smoke outside and not leave cigarettes around the house. Clean out your car. If you have a cigarette as soon as you wake up, try taking a shower instead of smoking. If your routine is to have a cup of coffee with a cigarette, drink it in a room where you normally do not smoke or switch to drinking tea. If you normally smoke while talking on the phone, keep a pen and paper handy for doodling instead of smoking. You may have to take your break at work with non-smokers instead of joining co-workers who go outside to smoke.
- 5. Get support.** Connect with a family member, friend or support group member who can provide positive reinforcement about your efforts to remain smoke-free. Keep in contact by phone or text. Go for a walk together or meet for lunch. Stop-smoking counseling and information is also available from online sites including the NYQUITS.com or NYS Smokers' Quitline 1- 866- 697-8487. Read a quitter's blog (and make postings of your own). Learn from how others have dealt with tobacco cravings.
- 6. Stay active.** Physical activity can help you to resist tobacco cravings and can reduce their intensity. Only 30 minutes of moderate exercise can help to stop these urges. Take a walk or run. If you can't get out of the house or office to exercise, try squats, deep-knee bends, jogging in place, or going up and down the stairs.

7. **Practice relaxation techniques.** Stress often occurs when coping with a craving to smoke or chew tobacco. Smoking may even have been your way to deal with stress in the past. Learn to calm yourself down by practicing relaxation techniques. These can include meditation, prayer, deep-breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, yoga, massage or hypnosis.
8. **Seek affirming activities.** Do activities that help you to develop a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. Try needlework, woodwork, filing papers, cooking, journaling, reading, or some home project that you have put off doing.
9. **Drink water.** Drinking water helps to flush out the toxins and nicotine in your body from tobacco. You may notice an increase in coughing during your first few days of quitting as your lungs work to clear out the residue from tobacco smoke that has previously lined airway passages.
10. **Chew on it.** Smoking is a habit that satisfies oral cravings. Keep your mouth busy by chewing sugarless gum or hard candy. You can also try raw carrots, celery, sunflower seeds or nuts. Try to avoid eating too many high fat foods that can cause weight gain.
11. **Try replacements.** You may choose to use a stop-smoking product. Some are available over-the-counter and give you nicotine through patches, gum or lozenges. Nicotine supplied through an inhaler or a nasal spray requires a prescription, as do the non-nicotine pills bupropion (zyban) and varenicline (Chantix). If you would like to try any of these medications, talk first with your doctor about what medication might be best for you.

Additional Resources

New York State Smokers' Quitline 1- 866- 697-8487

www.nyquits.com

http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/

www.smokefree.gov

www.lungusa.org

www.cancer.org