



County of San Diego Tobacco Control Program

Overcoming Tobacco Dependency

Nicotine

REPLACEMENT THERAPY NRT

Tobacco Dependency is Directly Tied to: Nicotine Addiction.

Smoking is the leading cause of premature, preventable death. Cigarette smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke cause an estimated average of 438,000 premature deaths each year in the United States. Of these premature deaths, about 40 percent are from cancer, 35 percent are from heart disease and stroke, and 25 percent are from lung disease.

Most people know that smoking is a bad habit that they can quit whenever they decided to. Just time quitters find this is not so. The fact is that smokers are not aware of their addiction. Most of them are surprised to know that they are addicted.

What is the difference between habit and addiction?

Habits shape our personalities and enrich our lives, but when they become obsessive and harmful, they turn into addictions. When these addictions hurt us, and those we love, we need to get help to break the addiction.

Addiction can take many forms. The most common addictions are substance abuse and repetitive, damaging behaviors. Substance abuse is a dependence.

Addiction dependence are characterized by compulsive drug-seeking and use, even in the face of negative consequences, and tobacco use certainly fits the description. In order to quit smoking successfully for the long term, it helps to understand the nature of nicotine addiction and what it takes to break free from it.

How much addictive is the nicotine?

Nicotine is Highly Addictive. Most smokers use tobacco regularly be-

Addiction Addiction



cause they are addicted to nicotine. Other factors to consider besides nicotine's addictive properties include its high level of availability and the strong marketing and advertising methods used by tobacco companies.

Recent research has shown how nicotine acts on the brain to produce a number of behavioral effects and activates the brain circuitry that regulates feelings of pleasure, also called reward pathways. A key brain chemical involved in mediating the desire to consume drugs is the neurotransmitter dopamine. The nicotine increases the levels of dopamine and enhance its abuse potential.

Cigarette smoking produces a rapid distribution of nicotine to the brain. The nicotine in inhaled tobacco smoke moves from the lungs, into the bloodstream and up to the smoker's brain within 7 to 10 seconds. Once there, nicotine triggers a number of chemical reactions that create temporary feelings of pleasure for the smoker, but these sensations are short-lived, subsiding within minutes. As the nicotine level drops in the blood, smokers feel edgy and agitated -- the start of nicotine withdrawal. So, in order to relieve the discomforts, smokers light up another cigarette, and continue the vicious cycle of addiction.

Most smokers report that one reason they smoke is to handle stress. When we're stressed, the urge to smoke can be intense. Urges to smoke as a result of stressful situations can and will happen occasionally as you recover from this addiction. Smokers, feel a need of the cigarettes to calm. It doesn't mean you need to smoke, and it doesn't mean you're going to fail. In fact, smoking creates more stress. Smoking won't make anything in your life better. It won't relieve stress, and it won't fix problems.

The release from nicotine addiction comes gradually, as you erase old associations and habits, replacing them with new, healthier choices. Stress is part of life, and learning how to manage it smoke-free is part of successful cessation. In time, you'll find that stress is more easily managed smoke-free than it ever was when you were smoking.

Nicotine replacement therapy NRT

Quitting cigarettes or other tobacco products can be hard to do. The reason is that smoking is an addictive habit. Nicotine is a drug found naturally in tobacco. It is highly addictive -- as addictive as heroin or cocaine. Over time, a person becomes physically and emotionally dependent on (addicted to) nicotine. The nicotine is incredibly strong and difficult to detoxify from the human body. When smokers try to cut back or quit, the lack of nicotine leads to withdrawal symptoms.

During an interview, President Barack Obama's recommendation for would-be quitters: "Eliminate 'certain key connections -- that first cigarette in the morning, or after a meal, or with a drink'."

The hard part of quitting is:

Controlling Your Cravings

Withdrawal symptoms are both physical and mental. Studies have shown that smokers must deal with both the physical and psychological (mental) dependence to quit and stay quit.

The mental symptoms of withdrawal are temper tantrums, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, irritability, restlessness, impatience, or anger, anxiety, depression. Most smokers find that the bigger challenge is the mental part of quitting. The physical withdrawal symptoms are: tingling in the hands and feet, sweating, intestinal disorders (cramps, nausea), headaches, sore throat, coughing, and signs of a cold. Withdrawal symptoms should be treated accordingly, just as you would with physical symptoms due to an illness or disease.

Nicotine replacement therapy NRT and other medicines can help reduce many of these symptoms.

Nicotine replacement therapy is safe when used properly. Most NRT therapies are designed to be for 8 to 12 weeks. Nicotine by itself is not nearly as harmful as smoking. The nicotine that keeps the smoker addicted, and tars, carbon monoxide, and other toxic chemicals in tobacco cause harmful effects, not the nicotine. When you inhale tobacco smoke, the nicotine in the smoke moves quickly from your lungs into your bloodstream. The nicotine in replacement products delivers nicotine to the smoker's brain in a much slower way than cigarettes do. Since it takes longer to get into the system, it helps to dampen down the urges to smoke, and gives to the smoker the chance to break smoking cues in their daily lives, and provides a more comfortable exit from the smoking habit. This is why nicotine replacement medications help and are much less likely to cause dependence on nicotine than are cigarettes and other tobacco products.

You can start using a nicotine replacement product on your quit date, not before as with other forms of treatment. Regardless of the method you use to quit smoking, you may cough more or start coughing for the first week after you quit. This is not a symptom of withdrawal from nicotine—it is the result of your body trying to clear your lungs. This happens whether you use nicotine replacement therapy or not.

Nicotine replacement comes in many forms, including: the nicotine patch, inhaler, nasal spray, gum, sublingual tablet, and lozenge. Choosing a form of nicotine replacement therapy is usually a matter of personal choice. People who smoke heavily are more successful when they use the strongest forms of the product (gum or lozenge with 4 mg of nicotine or patches with 21 mg or more nicotine in each patch).

It's important to remember that nicotine is a drug, and like most drugs, too much of it can lead to an overdose. It's important to follow the package instructions and to use no more nicotine than your doctor prescribes or recommends. Overdose Symptoms of Nicotine include excessive sweating, muscle weakness, dizziness, circulatory problems, nausea and/or vomiting, palpitations, diarrhea and heartburn. Cases of nicotine overdose on NRT are rare but if you do develop these symptoms you should consult your doctor.

If you find you cannot continue to use one form of nicotine replacement because of its side effects, stop using that form and try a different one.

Remember

Using nicotine replacement products, NRP doubles your chances to quitting smoking. Stopping your nicotine replacement therapy may cause of relapse. When you finally reduce your nicotine intake to zero, you still may have some symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. But these symptoms won't last.

If your doctor prescribes medication, you should let him or her know about any other prescription or non-prescription drugs, or herbal supplements you are taking, to avoid drug interactions.

Before you start using NRP, you may wonder about its success rate. Your own success in quitting is what really counts. There are 4 key elements in quitting with success. These are: making the decision to quit with setting a quit date, choosing a quit plan, dealing with withdrawal, and quit.

Warnings and Cautions

Nonsmokers and persons under 18 years of age should not be using a nicotine replacement products NRP. Be extra careful with children. You should not smoke while using NRP, as you would increase the risk a nicotine overdose. Do not use nicotine gum if you are pregnant, intend to become pregnant, or are breast-feeding. In rare cases, chewing Nicotine gum may cause damage to dentures and dental bridges. The gum is not recommended if you have dentures. Please consult with your doctor or pharmacist before starting a program with Nicotine gum or other NRP if you are taking any form of prescription medicine, or if you suffer from any form of heart or vascular disease, diabetes, liver or kidney disease or have an overactive thyroid condition. The nicotine dose may aggravate other conditions, such as active esophagitis, mouth inflammation, gastritis, or peptic ulcers.

Are you ready to stop smoking?

More than 46 million people have already quit, and you can too! Get free help, referral to local programs, and one-on-one confidential assistance to help quit smoking from the California Smokers' Helpline 1-800-NO-BUTTS.



California Smokers'
Helpline

free

1-800-NO-BUTTS

Free call. Free service. Freedom from cigarettes.
Call now ... for yourself and your family !



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