

Cessation

Fact Sheet

August 2004

Nicotine is the psychoactive drug in tobacco products that produces dependence.¹⁻³ Most smokers are dependent on nicotine,² and smokeless tobacco use can also lead to nicotine dependence.⁴ Nicotine dependence is the most common form of chemical dependence in the United States.³ Research suggests that nicotine is as addictive as heroin, cocaine, or alcohol.⁵ Examples of nicotine withdrawal symptoms include irritability, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, and increased appetite.¹ Quitting tobacco use is difficult and may require multiple attempts,² as users often relapse because of withdrawal symptoms.^{1,2} Tobacco dependence is a chronic condition that often requires repeated intervention.⁶

Health Benefits of Cessation

- People who stop smoking greatly reduce their risk of dying prematurely.^{7,8} Benefits are greater for people who stop at earlier ages, but cessation is beneficial at all ages.^{7,8}
- Smoking cessation lowers the risk for lung and other types of cancer.⁷ The risk for developing cancer declines with the number of years of smoking cessation.^{7,8}
- Risk for coronary heart disease, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease is reduced after smoking cessation.^{7,8} Coronary heart disease risk is substantially reduced within 1 to 2 years of cessation.⁸
- Cessation reduces respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.⁷ The rate of decline in lung function is slower among persons who quit smoking.^{7,8}
- Women who stop smoking before or during pregnancy reduce their risk for adverse reproductive outcomes such as infertility or having a low-birth-weight baby.⁸

Quitting Interest and Behavior Among Tobacco Users

- Among current U.S. adult smokers, 70% report that they want to quit completely.⁹ An estimated 41.2% of adult smokers in 2002 stopped smoking for at least 1 day during the previous year because they were trying to quit completely.¹⁰
- Nearly 54% of current high school cigarette smokers in the United States tried to quit smoking within the preceding year.¹¹

Cessation Methods

- Brief clinical interventions by health care providers can increase the chances of successful cessation, as can counseling and behavioral cessation therapies.⁶ Treatments with more person-to-person contact and intensity (e.g., more time with counselors) are more effective.⁶ Individual, group, or telephone counseling are all effective.⁶
- Pharmacological therapies found to be effective for treating tobacco dependence include nicotine replacement products (e.g., gum, inhaler, patch) and non-nicotine medications, such as Bupropion SR® (Zyban).⁶

References

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Note: More recent information may be available at the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health Web site:

<http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco>.