

YOUR FIRST WEEK WITHOUT SMOKING

A lot of the difficulties that people have when they stop smoking are actually due to giving up the nicotine, this is why it is helpful to use nicotine replacement. Using these products, will ease some of the withdrawal symptoms. They will still be present, although less severe, than stopping, "cold turkey".

Here is what you may expect to feel like:

- The urge to smoke may be strong and frequent at first, this craving will go away if you don't give into it.
- Irritable. Probably short tempered at times.
- You may find it harder than usual to concentrate.
- You will probably feel more depressed than usual.
- Hungry. Your appetite may increase.
- Restless, "at a loose end".
- Your sleep pattern may change. Better, longer sleep or insomnia.
- Some people complain of headaches and constipation.

There is no fool proof way of dealing with them but keeping as busy as you can and altering your daily routine will help. For example, avoid the pub if you think you will be strongly tempted to smoke there. Wash up and go for a walk after meals rather than sit in front of the TV.

None of these withdrawal symptoms will harm you and they are largely unavoidable.

Probably the most important thing to do is adopt the right mental attitude. Accept that they are going to trouble you to some extent but that they will gradually go away if you don't smoke at all. After about three weeks of not smoking you should be feeling more like your old self, although the urge to smoke will come back from time to time and you may continue to feel hungrier than you used to for some time longer.

You may find it helpful to view giving up smoking like a job of work that you have been putting off for a long time and have finally got round to. Now that you are all set to tackle it, make succeeding a priority in your life and give everything else second place for a while.

YOUR SECOND AND THIRD WEEKS WITHOUT SMOKING

The second week can seem harder than the first. This is because the novelty of doing something new is beginning to wear off.

Stick at it and remember to live one day at a time. Just aim to go to bed each night without smoking.

Cheer yourself up by buying something with the money saved from your first week without cigarettes.

You may develop a sore mouth and small ulcers. These are not serious and will go away. Some people develop a cough after stopping smoking, this should go away in due course.

Your health really does improve and your carbon monoxide level is now the same as a non-smoker.

The air can pass in and out of your lungs much more freely than when smoking was irritating them. You should be less breathless.

Your heart rate has decreased, and you have a healthier blood supply to your hands and feet.

Be wary of pubs and parties. Too much alcohol will increase craving and reduce your ability to handle it sensibly.

By the end of the third week you may find that the worst of the withdrawal symptoms are over. These may be replaced by some rather confusing emotions. On the one hand you may feel glad to be rid of cigarettes but at the same time have very definite feelings of loss – like losing a friend – is the way people often put it.

This is a clue to the best way of managing the experience. Have patience, if you have ever lost a real friend or have been bereaved, you will know that only time can help you come to terms with their absence.