



Smoking and Stress Management

Stress is your body's way of reacting to change. The change can be either good or bad and can come from changes in your job, your home life, a relationship, an illness or other situations in your life. Not everyone reacts to change by becoming stressed. If you do feel stressed, you may notice physical, mental or emotional changes that make you feel uncomfortable.

Does smoking really help me deal with stress?

When you smoke, you may feel less stressed. This is because you have distracted yourself, or turned your attention away from what is causing the stress. What you may not realize is the harmful effects of smoking on your body. Research studies show that smoking actually **increases** the stress level on your body. The only stress that is relieved from smoking is avoiding the withdrawal symptoms from quitting.

Smoking causes different types of stress on your body. These stressors affect the amount of oxygen you get, how your blood vessels work, your blood sugar levels and chemicals that enter your body. Smoking will therefore cause the following things to happen in your body:

- decreases the amount of oxygen going to your brain
- narrows your blood vessels, causing your heart to work harder, and increases your chances of having a heart attack or stroke
- increases your chances of developing diabetes and can make managing diabetes more difficult.
- exposes you to poisons, carcinogens (cancer forming substances) and other chemicals that put a strain on almost every organ in your body and increases your chance of getting cancer

If you smoke to decrease your stress, start to think about other ways to reduce your stress.

What can I do to reduce my stress and make myself feel better?

Stress can be reduced by avoiding things that give you stress and finding ways that work for you that reduce the stress. Try to figure out what is causing your stress. Think of healthy

ways to relieve stress that do not involve smoking. Take care of yourself by eating a well-balanced diet and drinking plenty of water. Here are some other things that may help:

- Limit the amount of caffeine you drink.
- Relax by taking a warm bath or shower or getting a massage.
- Increase your activity level. Exercise helps reduce stress while improving how you feel about yourself.
- Spend time with family, friends and pets.
- Get enough rest and sleep.
- Listen to music.
- Take time just to relax. Relaxation eliminates tension from your body and your mind.
- Take a few deep breaths and clear your mind of your worries.
- Be proud of yourself for every minute you do not smoke. The minutes will add up and become hours, days, and weeks.
- Reward yourself! Use the money you saved from not smoking for a vacation or buy yourself something special.

Where can I get help to quit smoking?

Talk to your health care provider to find out if medications, including nicotine replacement products, might help you quit smoking.

- Find a local smoking cessation program by visiting <http://www.quitnet.com/library/programs/>.
- Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669) for telephone counseling and information about quitting in your state.

Don't give up! Keep trying.

Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health!

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Smoking and Stress Management (cont.)

ACTION STEPS:

If you are feeling extra stress because you have decided to quit smoking, this is normal. Stopping smoking is a big change, but an important one. Knowing what is causing your stress is a big part of overcoming it. The following action steps may help.

- Speak with your health care provider about ways to help reduce your stress
- Keep in mind all of the health benefits you will gain for yourself and your family by stopping smoking
- Try different ways to reduce your stress, no one way works for everyone
- Try not to get discouraged if you relapse. Learn something from each quit attempt and try again.

Authors: Tobacco Control Committee of the American Thoracic Society, Patricia Folan RN, MS, Christine Fardellone RN, MS.

Reviewers: Suzanne C Lareau RN, MS, Bonnie Fahy, RN, MN

Resources:

About.com. Smoking Cessation How to cope with stress when you quit smoking:

<http://quitsmoking.about.com/od/stressmanagement/a/stresstips.htm>

Call 1-800-QUITNOW (1-800-784-8669)

Medicine Net

<http://www.medicinenet.com/stress/article.htm>