

## Tobacco Use 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 tobacco use really help me deal with stress?

When you use tobacco, you may feel relaxed or less stressed. The problem is, once you are finished, the urge to smoke will return. The absence of nicotine can change your perception of stress, making it seem worse. This can cause stress to increase.

### How is tobacco affecting my body?

Research studies show that tobacco use actually increases the stress level on your body.

Tobacco use has many effects on your body. These include:

- Decreased amount of oxygen going to your brain.
- Narrowed blood vessels, causing your heart to work harder, and increases your chances of having a heart attack or stroke.
- Increased chances of developing diabetes and making diabetes management more difficult.
- Exposure to poisons, cancer forming substances and other chemicals that put a strain on almost every organ in your body.

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

Stress can be reduced by avoiding stressful situations. Think of healthy ways to relieve stress that do not involve tobacco use. Here are some tips that may work:

- Eat a well balanced diet
- Drink plenty of water
- 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 use tobacco. The minutes will add up and become hours, days, and weeks.

- Reward yourself! Use the money you saved from not using tobacco to buy yourself something special.

### Where can I get help to stop tobacco use?

Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if medications, including nicotine replacement products, bupropion, and varenicline, might help you stop tobacco use. For more information see the ATS Patient Information series at [www.thoracic.org/patients](http://www.thoracic.org/patients).

- 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 stopping in your state.

**Don't give up! Keep trying.**

**Stopping tobacco use is one of the most important things you can do to improve your health!**

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## Rx Action Steps

If you are feeling stress because you have decided to stop tobacco use, this is normal. Stopping tobacco use is a big change, but an important one. Knowing what is causing your stress plays a large part in overcoming it. The following action steps may help.

- ✓ Speak with your healthcare 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 tobacco use.
- ✓ Try different ways to reduce your stress, no one way works for everyone.
- ✓ Try not to get discouraged if you slip and go back to tobacco use. Learn something from each quit attempt and try again.

**Healthcare Provider's Contact Number:**

### 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>

<https://www.smokershelp.net/stress-a-normal-part-of-life/>

<https://smokefree.gov/challenges-when-quitting/stress-mood/stress-smoking>

<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/quit-smoking/guide/stress-and-smoking.html>

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