

## Tips for Dealing with Nicotine Cravings in a Tobacco-Free Environment

Now that UK is a Tobacco-Free Environment, tobacco users may experience discomfort from nicotine withdrawal while on campus. Here are some suggestions that might be helpful whether or not you've decided to quit. These are some practical suggestions that may help you reduce cravings and other withdrawal symptoms when you are on the campus grounds.

TRIGGER or PROBLEM	SOLUTION
Keeping hands busy	Find a stress ball or paper clip you can play with. Keep something in your hands other than a cigarette. This is a time many folks take up a new hands-on activity like word puzzles, knitting/crocheting, etc.
Social gatherings	If you had a habit of smoking when consuming a certain food or beverage (usually coffee or alcohol), avoid them for a while. They may increase your discomfort caused by not smoking. Sip SLOWLY on another beverage. Seek out nonsmokers to hang out with at breaks or meal times.
After meals	Leave the table quickly after finishing your meal. Have sugar-free mints or gum available to pop in your mouth right after you finish eating. Take a short walk after your meal.
Stress	Sit down alone, close your eyes and take 10 slow, deep breaths. Call your support person and vent. Take a walk or get up and move around the office or campus.

- "Quitter's flu" is used to describe this first phase of stopping smoking or a major decrease in tobacco consumption because withdrawal symptoms often mimic a cold or a mild case of the flu.
- Remember that withdrawal is temporary...your body and brain will adjust!
- You may have some or all of these symptoms at different stages. They are usually short-lived.
- If you use tobacco on breaks, be sure you go outside the tobacco free boundaries.
- **Coping Skills for Nicotine Withdrawal—The Five D's**
  - **Delay** until the urge passes - usually within 3 to 5 minutes.
  - **Distract** yourself. Call a friend or go for a walk if possible.
  - **Drink water** to fight off cravings.
  - **Deep Breaths** - Relax! Close your eyes and take 10 slow, deep breaths.
  - **Discuss your feelings** with someone close to you
- **Exercise**
  - Take a 15-minute walk once or twice a day, and work up from there, especially during the times you would normally smoke or use tobacco
  - **Regular** exercise helps to control cravings for cigarettes and food, and it can increase cravings for healthier food choices.
  - Exercise is a positive activity that can become a new habit that replaces smoking. Try it for at least a month, which is about how long it takes to form a new habit.
- **Changes to Your Appetite**
  - When individuals decrease or stop tobacco use, they tend to use food as a replacement when the urge to smoke strikes.

- Be aware that you may find yourself snacking more, and on unhealthy foods.
- Keep healthy snacks and foods easily available, and don't skip meals.
- **Get More Rest**
  - Your bodies are used to taking in not only nicotine, but all of the other chemicals in cigarette smoke; cutting off or reducing that supply creates physical stress and fatigue
  - Go to bed a little earlier than usual.
  - If you're at the opposite end of the spectrum and find yourself unable to sleep, try taking a long walk several hours before bed
- **Nicotine Replacement**
  - Patches are available to you at cost (about \$20 for 14 generic patches) at the Kentucky Clinic outpatient pharmacy and Corner Stores. If you need help calculating a dose to keep you comfortable, ask your pharmacist or call Audrey Darville, ARNP, CTTS at (859) 323-4222
  - Nicotine gum in small packs can be purchased for around \$5 at the gift shop and Kentucky Clinic pharmacy (less than the cost of a pack of cigarettes!). It can be used every 1-2 hours as needed for cravings.
- **Quitting for Good**
  - Get help quitting if you are interested. The single best thing you can do for your health in your lifetime is to quit smoking. Visit <http://www.uky.edu/TobaccoFree> for resources available.
- **Did you Know?**
  - Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease.
  - 70% of smokers want to quit.
  - Working in a tobacco free environment helps people quit and stay quit.

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