



## What Would Life Without Nicotine Look Like?

Quitting nicotine can be your first step toward healing. Nicotine causes the blood vessels to shrink, which then deliver less blood where you need it for healing.

The carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke reduces the amount of oxygen in your blood by attaching to red blood cells faster than oxygen. This can cause serious problems during recovery since reduced oxygen results in slower healing. Carbon monoxide also forces your heart to work harder to circulate blood throughout your body.

Use this time in the hospital to devise a plan for quitting. This booklet contains information to help you take control and quit smoking for good.

Fill out the card that says "Reason to quit", fold it and keep it where you previously kept your cigarettes. When you think of using it and your hand goes looking, it reminds you why there is nothing there.

All addiction controls your pleasure. That is why it is difficult to do social things without nicotine when you are used to having it. Three weeks is all it takes to control your own pleasure again.

There is never a good time to do something that is hard!



## The Health Impact of Cigarettes

Even one cigarette a day adds to the blockage in the arteries, but when you quit the extra plaque actually starts going away. In the first year alone you are three times more likely to be back in the hospital if you go home and smoke. But if you quit, you can be down to a non-smoker's chance of heart attack in three to five years. This happens even faster if you exercise.\*

The risk for cancer patients who continue to smoke is that cigarette smoking decreases the effectiveness of cancer treatments, increases the probability of recurrence and reduces survival time, so it's beneficial for cancer patients to quit smoking.\*\*

Everything heals faster and you fight infection better if you are not smoking when you go home. Bones heal twice as fast when you are not smoking.

The use of nicotine in any form makes you more likely to go back to smoking or start smoking in the future. Exposing your brain to nicotine can affect attention, learning and memory. Dual use of vape and cigarettes is more dangerous than either by itself.

Never give up trying to quit! Sometimes we have to learn from our previous quit attempts to know what to do differently next time.

\*American Heart Association®

\*\*American Cancer Society®




# NICOTINE ADDICTION IS REAL!

Whatever addiction gives you, it also takes away. When smoking relieves your stress, it actually causes the stress to rebound back, causing you to want another one. Your endorphin level actually goes below normal when you use something addictive within five to 20 minutes of finishing. Your stress comes back even worse than before.

When you stop using addictive substances like nicotine for at least three weeks, your endorphin level no longer drops below normal. Studies shows that people are less stressed and happier without nicotine.

**You and your health are important.** If you know you are going to be in a situation where it is going to be difficult to stick to your quit plan, ask someone to help keep you honest.





## Get Ready to Quit – Physically and Mentally

**Set your quit date.** Make sure that it is a time when you will have support and be busy doing things with people who do not smoke.

**Postpone smoking.** If you don't seem to be able to quit now but still want to work on quitting, consider postponing each nicotine use at least five minutes from when you have the urge. Each time you postpone smoking, it helps you gain self-control and self-confidence. **You** are deciding when you can have nicotine and not your addiction.

**Consider cutting back.** Decrease the number of times you smoke by one-third every two weeks. Or, cut the nicotine level by one-third every two weeks. Another way to get the habit under control is to start restricting where you allow yourself to smoke.

**Imagine yourself cigarette-free.** Focus on the positive. Make a list of all the positive things about yourself that don't involve smoking and put it somewhere where you can see it often. Remind yourself that smoking doesn't define you.

## Change Your Habits, Change Your Life

Creating a temptation-free home includes getting rid of anything that reminds you of smoking and checking pockets to make sure you get them all. If you do have someone else in your home or social circle that smokes or vapes, ask them to quit with you.

Let your friends know that you are quitting so they don't bring cigarettes around that could trigger your cravings. If they do, ask them to smoke outside and to not leave it lying around where you can see it. Tell someone supportive that you are quitting and tell them ahead of time that you may be calling for a pep talk.

Most people require several attempts to quit smoking before they make it happen. If you are not able to quit, keep trying because it is worth it.

## How Much Money Will You Save?

The average smoker may spend as much as

**\$2,292  
a year**

on cigarettes. Many people put out a jar and start throwing money in it every day. Reward yourself with something big just for you. You are worth celebrating.



## Be Serious About Quitting

Get rid of everything that has to do with smoking. If you have someone that can do that for you now, that keeps you from having to do it when you get home! Know what you are going to do before the urge hits.

Take your survival kit with you everywhere you go. Keep things in the car that you can fiddle with and something to change the flavor in your mouth. If you are having trouble in the car, audio books can help, because they stimulate a different part of your brain and you have to concentrate, keeping you from wanting to smoke as often.

## Withdrawal Symptoms

These include feelings of irritability, agitation or thinking about smoking constantly. There are nicotine medications designed to help curb these feelings through the gradual decrease of the nicotine level in your body. Withdrawal symptoms usually start within 24 hours, top out at day three or four, then start getting better. However, they can last up to three weeks.

Your doctor may allow you to have a nicotine patch here at the hospital. Use any available means to put the odds in your favor of not only quitting now for your healing, but quitting forever for your future health.

Typically, within three weeks you are controlling your own pleasure again, as your brain can more easily release endorphins, especially dopamine, on its own.

## Medications to Help You Quit

The medications to help you quit smoking include nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) like nicotine gums, lozenges and patches. These are over-the-counter medications.

THE MOST COMMON PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS INCLUDE:

- Nicotine nasal spray
- Nicotine oral spray
- Nicotine Inhaler
- Chantix®
- Wellbutrin®

Prescription medications can be used on their own or in combination with the other nicotine replacement products to help the withdrawal symptoms.

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**1. GUARD AGAINST BOREDOM.**

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**2. KEEP THOSE HANDS BUSY.**

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**3. TRY DEEP BREATHING.**

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**4. GET ACTIVE!**

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**5. CELEBRATE YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS.**

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## Tips for Handling the Urges

In the beginning, the longest an urge might last is three-to-five minutes. With time, the urges get shorter, and further apart. While you are still in the hospital, use this time to practice what you are going to do at home.

**Guard against boredom.** Many people who try to quit when they are home recuperating start thinking about smoking when they sit down to watch TV or other entertainment options. Keep yourself busy! Find a game on your phone, go for a walk or read a book.

Anything that changes the flavor in your mouth helps you get through the urges faster. Some people use gum, sugar-free candies or mints. Sunflower seeds or beef jerky can also be used if you are not on a salt-restrictive diet. Many people brush their teeth when they want to smoke.

**Keep those hands busy.** Common things to hold are toothpicks, pencils for doodling, cut straws or stir sticks for coffee. Some people also start carrying a water bottle with them everywhere they go.

**Try deep breathing.** Close your eyes and relax. Breathe in slowly through your nose and feel your stomach expand. Hold your breath while counting to eight seconds. Exhale slowly, while counting silently to eight. Feel your stomach move down and feel your shoulders relax. Do this slow, deep breathing cycle of exercises five times. Since deep breathing releases endorphins (*the "happy" chemicals in the brain*), it helps you quit using nicotine and be less stressed doing it.

**Get active!** Exercise of any kind releases endorphins. When an urge hits, take a quick walk or get outdoors and have some fun. Studies show exercise can increase your likelihood of quitting nicotine for good.

**Celebrate your accomplishments.** Recognizing your accomplishments can boost resistance to stress and cravings. Even making it through your first few hours is a big win. Each and every nicotine-free moment is to be welcomed and celebrated.





# DID YOU KNOW?

**NRT is less addictive than smoking and does not create a new addiction. It helps your body slowly get away from the nicotine, which helps you transition to a tobacco-free life.**

If the price of the NRT is a concern, help is available. Tobacco Free Amarillo offers classes that include up to two months of free NRT.

Caffeine effects may be increased when you stop using nicotine. You may have to reduce the amount of caffeine you are drinking so you can sleep at night.

If you can't concentrate, try the deep breathing exercise described on page 10 or take a walk. This usually gets better by the fourth day without a cigarette, but your concentration should be back to normal within a month.

If your coughing increases when you get home, it means your lungs are starting to clean themselves out. Your lungs can't do this until eight hours after your last cigarette. It takes about two weeks for most people to notice an improvement in their breathing, but it will happen.



Headaches are usually caused by increased circulation of blood to the brain. Get some rest, take headache medicine and do your deep breathing exercises.

Quitting smoking can cause constipation. If this happens, increase your water and fiber intake. It may also help to drink a cup of hot water 30 minutes before breakfast or use a laxative.

## If You Have a Relapse

Slip-ups happen, particularly during the first three months. Have a plan in place. *Five major causes of relapse include:*

- Alcohol consumption
- Stress
- Boredom
- The company of smokers
- Depression

Set a new start date for yourself and keep going. You've already made progress!

## There is No Magical Cure

Quitting is only part of the process. Learning to live without nicotine is the "rest of the story".

Addiction will always tell you that you are in control and that you can use it occasionally and not go back, but that is not how addiction truly works.

Resources to Help

## 800-QUIT-NOW

PHONE SUPPORT SPECIFICALLY FOR SMOKERS:

[tobaccofreeamarillo.com/Events](https://tobaccofreeamarillo.com/Events)

Free classes supplying free NRT products, apps, videos and tips to quit on your own.

### Tobacco Free Amarillo's Resource Line

Providing counseling, support, medication assistance and referrals for all Amarillo Residents. Call **806-331-2400**.

### SmokefreeTXT

Free text messaging programs that give 24/7 encouragement, advice, and tips for becoming smoke-free. Text **AMARILLO** to **47848**.



**REMEMBER ...**

**YOU HAVE NOT FAILED  
UNTIL YOU QUIT TRYING.**

1. *You are unique and unrepeatable!  
Take this opportunity to support  
yourself and who you want to be.*
2. *Don't allow what you want right  
now to interfere with your desire  
for your future.*



# You can quit smoking!

You can choose right now to increase your ability to heal and improve your overall health!



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**Northwest Texas  
Healthcare System**

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); US Department of Health and Human Services (smokefree.gov)

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