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HEALTH

Tips to quit smoking: 10 easy ways to conquer tobacco cravings

Check out these 10 simple strategies to help you resist the impulse to smoke or use tobacco when a craving occurs



Tips to quit smoking: 10 easy ways to conquer tobacco cravings (Photo by Zachary Nelson on Unsplash)

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By Zarafshan Shiraz, Delhi

If you are a [smoker](#), your mind may be preoccupied with the temptation to have a [cigarette](#) with your morning coffee, after a tough day at work, after a fight with a member of your family or in a variety of other situations. Nicotine, which is a component of [tobacco](#) that is addictive, triggers brain receptors to release dopamine, which results in a pleasurable response but the number of nicotine receptors in the brain rises with time, [altering its anatomy](#).

Cigarette smoking causes one-third of all cancers and 90% of lung cancer cases and in addition, it is a factor in cardiovascular disease, stroke and lung illness. Tobacco addiction is associated with both mental and physical behaviours and you must address both in order to control your desire like when you feel the need to smoke, tell yourself that it will likely pass in a matter of minutes.

Each time you resist a tobacco craving, you move closer to quitting tobacco for good. In an interview with HT Lifestyle, Psychologist Dr Malini Saba, Founder and Chairman of Anannke Foundation, discussed five simple strategies to help you resist the impulse to smoke or use tobacco when a craving occurs:

1. Find a valid reason - It can be a personal reason, such as improving health or reducing the chance of acquiring diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease, or other ailments; protecting your family from passive smoking; it can also be a spiritual one. You must carefully analyse the reason for quitting smoking so that it is convincing enough to overcome the desire to smoke.

2. Avoiding triggers - Triggers may include situations in which you previously smoked or chewed tobacco, such as at parties, when drinking, or under stress. Identifying trigger situations, avoiding them totally, or coping with them with non-tobacco coping mechanisms can be helpful. For example, if you usually smoke after lunch, try eating a piece of dark chocolate, which contains nicotine. Dark chocolate boosts serotonin and dopamine, improving mood and reducing stress but dark chocolate is lung-friendly.

3. Snack on it - Give your tongue something to do to combat cigarette cravings. Chew gum or hard candy without sugar. Or nibble on raw carrots, almonds, fox-nuts, or sunflower seeds—something crunchy and delicious. While attempting to quit smoking, you should not diet. It may put your body under additional stress and can backfire horribly. Try to keep your routine simple and consume more fruits, veggies, whole grains and protein, all of which are beneficial to your health.

4. Hobbies and physical activity - Physical activity can help to distract you from your desire to smoke. Physical activities, such as exercise, sports, yoga, brisk walks, deep breathing and even dancing, might provide a distraction from tobacco cravings and diminish their intensity. If it is not possible to engage in physical activity, hobbies such as writing, art, and crafts, meditation, stitching, planting, journal writing, cleaning, painting, visualisation, massage, or listening to soothing music can be just as beneficial.

5. Don't have 'only one' - You may be tempted to smoke or chew tobacco just once. But don't kid yourself into thinking that this is the point where you can quit. When you start with one, you almost always end up wanting more than one. And there's always the possibility that you'll start smoking again.

Bringing his expertise to the same, Dr Anuneet Sabharwal, MBBS, MD Psychiatrist, Founder and Director of The Happy Tree, shared five simple tips to fight tobacco cravings:

1. Try nicotine replacement therapy - Discuss nicotine replacement therapy with your doctor. A doctor can help with nicotine addiction by replacing tobacco with slower-releasing nicotine products. Nicotine replacement therapy aims to reduce nicotine until the patient can quit. This reduces withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Nicotine chewing gum, lozenges, and patches are available over-the-counter, but an inhaler or nasal spray is usually prescribed. E-cigarettes are a popular alternative to traditional cigarettes, but they're not safer or more successful than nicotine-replacement therapy.

2. Seek support from family and friends - Inform your close friends, family, and other that you are attempting to quit smoking. They can urge you to continue, particularly when you are tempted to smoke. You can also join a support group or consult a therapist. Join an online programme to help you quit smoking or, read a quitter's blog and offer uplifting comments to someone who may be experiencing smoking cravings.

3. Ginseng Tea - Ginseng can aid in the reduction of nicotine addiction by reducing the influence of dopamine, a neurotransmitter in the brain associated with pleasure that is released when smoking tobacco. Daily consumption of ginseng tea might consequently lower cravings.

4. Delay - Tell yourself that you must first wait 10 minutes before giving in to your tobacco cravings. Use all means necessary to divert your attention at this time. Instead of smoking, try going to a smoke-free public space, listening to music, or doodling. These easy approaches may be adequate to help you quit your cigarette addiction.

5. Milk and dairy items - Milk and other dairy products can exacerbate the flavour of cigarettes, producing a harsh aftertaste that is unpleasant. This impact can assist in quitting smoking.

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