

Nicotine Addiction Treatment

Written by Suzanne Wright

 Medically Reviewed by [Jennifer Casarella, MD](#) on August 28, 2022

The feel-good chemical in [tobacco](#)  products is nicotine. Whether you chew tobacco, vape, or smoke cigarettes or [cigars](#), that's what gives you the buzz.

Once nicotine gets into your blood it heads right to [your brain](#). Within 10 seconds it boosts levels of a feel-good chemical in your brain called [dopamine](#). But the rush goes away quickly, so you need more to get the same high. Over time, using nicotine rewires pathways in your brain tied to the way you handle stress. You need it to feel good physically and mentally. In short, you're addicted.

Worldwide, nicotine abuse causes 7 million deaths a year. And tobacco users often develop serious health problems like lung cancer, [chronic bronchitis](#), and [emphysema](#).

Symptoms of Nicotine Abuse

Whether it's you or someone you love, the first step to treating a nicotine addiction is admitting there's a problem. How do you know if you're dependent? These are some signs:

- You've tried to quit using nicotine, but can't
- You avoid being at places or with friends where you can't smoke
- You use tobacco to [manage stress](#) or anxiety

- You have health problems, but you still use tobacco
- You get irritable, moody, restless, shaky, or angry when you don't use nicotine
- You crave nicotine

Once you recognize the negative effects of nicotine, you can take steps to kick your unhealthy habit. That starts with seeing your doctor. They'll ask you questions about how you use nicotine to figure out if you're addicted and how serious your problem is.

Tobacco Treatment Options

No matter how long you've been using nicotine, when you stop, your health improves. Research shows a mix of [counseling](#)  and medications works best to help you kick the habit.

Proven counseling treatments include:

- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT):** This type of [talk therapy](#) can help you recognize the thoughts, situations, and people that trigger your tobacco use. You'll work with a therapist to build strategies that will improve your odds of stopping.
- **Motivational interviewing:** A counselor will help you figure out what's stopping you from quitting and what will inspire you to make healthy changes. They'll also point out gaps between your goals and current behavior.
- **Mindfulness:** This will help you become aware of and learn to detach from feeling, thoughts, and cravings that could cause you to use tobacco again. You'll also learn ways to manage stress and negative thoughts that don't involve tobacco.

- **Support hotlines:** Every state offers free telephone help lines with trained counselors who can help you navigate smoking-related stress. You can call once or repeatedly, and your conversation is confidential. The number is 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also offers a Smoking Quitline at 877-44U-QUIT (877-448-7848).
- **Web, text, or social media-based interventions:** You can harness your cell phone, tablet, or social media accounts to help yourself quit smoking. These technologies break down geographical barriers, and they're also low- or no-cost. These tools can work in combination with other smoking cessation methods.

Medications that can help you kick nicotine include:

- **Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT):** Effective over-the counter-remedies include patches, gum, lozenges, and sprays. These products target the same receptors in your brain that nicotine does. That's how they safely ease cravings and withdrawal symptoms. NRT is especially helpful in the beginning of your stop-smoking efforts, or if you have a severe addiction.
- **Antidepressants:** First used to treat [depression](#), [bupropion](#) changes the way your brain processes feel-good chemicals. You'll need a prescription for it. [Nortriptyline](#) and selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors also work well with NRTs.
- **Varenicline (Chantix):** This prescription medication helps your brain release the same chemicals that [smoking](#) does.

Alternative treatments that might help include:

- **Acupuncture** : It's part of some stop-smoking programs. Some studies show it may help more in the short term. And others say it doesn't work as well as NRTs.

- **Hypnotherapy:** Research results are mixed when it comes to this treatment. Some suggest it might help. Others say it doesn't.

What works for one person may not work for another. Talk to your doctor. They can help you create a personalized treatment plan with the best shot for long-term success.