

# Things to Consider when Quitting Smoking

by *Robert MacDonald*

*Director of Health Initiatives, Lung Association of Nova Scotia*

New Year's resolutions most often include lifestyle changes to improve one's health, so it may come as no surprise that quitting smoking ranks among the most common of resolutions that people make. Smoking remains a significant issue in Nova Scotia as shown by the latest CTADS report that indicates we have among the highest smoking rates in the country. That being said, 80 per cent of smokers do want to quit and it is important that support systems are in place to assist them to be successful.

At the Lung Association of Nova Scotia (LANS), we offer assistance and information to those wanting to quit by promoting therapies that are approved by Health Canada. There are a variety of methods available such as nicotine therapy replacements (NRTs), prescription medications, and of course cold turkey. All of these proposed methods have a higher success rate when combined with counselling and we recommend that you work with your health care provider to design a quit plan best suited for your lifestyle.

Quitting smoking can be a difficult task. A cigarette contains the highly addictive drug nicotine, which through smoking, your body and your brain have become accustomed to, and suddenly cutting off this supply can cause withdrawal symptoms. Some people will find their symptoms easy to manage while others will find them unbearable. It is important to remember that in most cases, withdrawal symptoms begin to decline after the first week.

While each individual will face their own unique symptoms for withdrawal, common ones include: Irritability, Low Energy, Sleepiness, Dizziness, Lack of Focus, Hunger, and Chest Tightness.

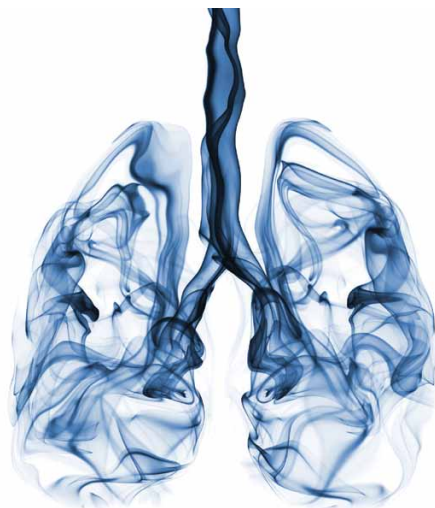
To be successful, one must find effective ways to cope with cravings. When you have an urge to smoke, try

one of the following tactics instead:

Drink water as much as possible, especially during cravings

Take a deep breath break instead of a smoke break. Breathe in and pause for a few seconds, and slowly exhale. This will help you relax

Delay as long as possible and eventually



it will pass. Don't believe that you 'can just have one' as this often leads to using tobacco again.

Distract yourself by staying active. It is important to avoid your triggers by switching up your routine.

Since nicotine is the addictive component in tobacco, NRTs which includes nicotine gum, patches, lozenges and inhalers are commonly used in quit smoking attempts. All forms can be purchased without a prescription at a pharmacy. NRTs will enter nicotine into your bloodstream after being absorbed through the layers of the mouth or skin. This differs from smoking where nicotine enters your body through the lungs. To minimize or avoid withdrawal symptoms, NRTs allow your body to still receive nicotine, without the harmful additives that come with tobacco. The amount of nicotine in an NRT may be less than the amount derived from smoking.

Recommended dosages can be adjusted and NRTs can be used in conjunction with each other. This may help for those with greater nicotine dependence or for those who have experienced withdrawal effects during a previous quit attempt. Health care providers can assist in individualizing treatment plans.

Tobacco dependence can be viewed as a chronic addiction, requiring repeated episodes of treatment. Therefore, you may find it helpful to use some form of medication to stop using tobacco. Consult with your health care provider as there can be circumstances when medical prescriptions are not recommended (e.g. incompatibility with other medications). Medications come with side effects and it is useful to discuss this with a health care professional. If you normally smoke within the first half-hour of waking, or you smoke more than 15 cigarettes a day, medications are likely to be of even greater assistance. Check to see if your health care insurance plan offers any financial support. Varenicline and bupropion are the two prescription medications for quitting smoking that are currently available in Canada.

There is also the option of cold turkey

which is quitting smoking immediately without any medications. Recently, LANS hosted a Quit Cold Turkey Challenge which encouraged participants to quit smoking for 30 days and if successful they would receive a free turkey for Christmas. The sentiment behind it was that the best gift you can give to yourself and your family for Christmas is your health. The response was overwhelmingly positive and over 100 people were able to quit smoking. It showed that many smokers want to quit and only need a little motivation which can go a long way to better health. LANS is committed to assisting people to quit smoking and are always looking to partner with the public or organizations such as the NSTU on creative health initiatives.

For those attempting to quit, it is important to realize that smoking is an addiction. It is easy to get down on oneself when going through the process, therefore, support from family and friends is vital. People quit for a variety of reasons whether it is to save money, to improve personal health, or to protect loved ones from second hand smoke. Whatever the reason may be remember that quitting smoking can be done and the benefits are definitely worth it.

## Did You Know?

After Quitting For...	Benefits Include...
8 hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carbon monoxide levels drop in the body</li> <li>• Oxygen levels in blood return to normal</li> </ul>
48 hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chances of smoking related heart attack decrease</li> <li>• Sense of taste and smell begin to improve</li> </ul>
72 hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breathing becomes easier as bronchial tubes relax</li> <li>• Lung capacity increases</li> </ul>
2 wks – 3 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blood circulation improves</li> <li>• Lung function increases by 30%</li> </ul>
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coughing, stuffy nose, tiredness and shortness of breath will start to improve</li> </ul>
1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk of smoking related heart attack is cut in half</li> </ul>

Other great benefits include: Significant financial savings, whiter teeth and fresher breath, healthier skin and fewer wrinkles, setting a better example for children, better air quality in your home or vehicle, and many more! Share your reasons to quit with friends and family. Post them around your home or office as a reminder throughout your journey to quit!

Source: [www.lung.ca](http://www.lung.ca)