

## Staying “Quit”: Day 2 and Beyond

You’ve made it through that first day without a cigarette, and now it’s Day Two. Shouldn’t it be easier, you say to yourself? You so want a cigarette, and the cravings are even worse today. Yes, they are worse and will be for awhile. Day One was about challenging nicotine-driven habits and thoughts. Day Two and Beyond will be about toughing out the withdrawal from your nicotine addiction while you continue to wear down the mental habits. Outlasting the addiction will be harder. If you are not using nicotine replacement products, your body is ridding itself of nicotine at the highest rate possible, and it was very addicted to that. It will take 72 hours for all the nicotine to leave your body, and in those three days your body will object. If you are using nicotine replacement products, your daily intake has drastically decreased, and your body is objecting to the lower doses.

### The Tobacco Addiction and Habit

During the first few days and weeks without tobacco, the cravings may be fierce because you aren’t giving in to them with the usual doses of nicotine. They are actually a bit farther apart each day, but the process is so gradual you may not notice this yet. In combating those cravings, it is important to understand what changed in your mind and body during your years on nicotine and what needs to recover now that you are no longer taking in nicotine.

- Your chemical dependency on nicotine is every bit as real as alcoholism or any other addiction. As with other addictions, your brain has been rewired by the addictive substance. In your case, nicotine and acetylcholine receptors were developed to accommodate the incoming nicotine. Brain circuitry changed as the brain adjusted to the dozens of daily nicotine-induced dopamine/adrenaline highs. This has been your body’s sense of “normal” for a long time. As nicotine is withdrawn, the brain will have to readjust daily to new levels.
- Some symptoms of anxiety, irritability, fatigue, and difficulty concentrating will come from readjustments in blood sugar, which had been regulated by nicotine during your years of use. You can combat this in the first days with fruit juices, tapering off gradually. Don’t skip meals. It is best to eat several small meals each day for awhile after quitting tobacco use, so that your blood sugar levels remain more even throughout the entire day.
- Your mind has responded to dozens of nicotine feeding cues every day, many of which were in the form of brief episodes of anxiety. This has been a subconscious process. Part of the cravings you experience will be from this subconscious cueing of anxiety. Your overall anxiety level may intensify for a few days when the last nicotine leaves the body (about three days after quitting) because the anxiety will be both physical and mental.
- Tobacco use is all about attitude. You’ve spent many years defending your need to smoke to yourself and to others. You’ve had to rationalize the expense, the damage to your health, your clothes, your furniture, etc. You may continue to be defensive and withdrawn for awhile, but continued freedom from tobacco use should change your attitude toward other people and to life in general.

### Daily Strategies to Combat Withdrawal and Re-Work the Habits

Overcoming the tobacco habit and addiction will take time. Success will depend on your creating another day of healing and recovery. So, it is a day-by-day process. Each day you start anew.

1. Break your morning routine by doing something different each morning. Do not go back to any of your old nicotine-driven routines.

## Staying “Quit”: Day 2 and Beyond, cont.

### Daily Strategies to Combat Withdrawal and Re-Work the Habits, cont.

2. Maintain your journaling and re-read what you’ve written. Your notes may reflect the subtle changes in mood, energy levels, and overall functioning that you didn’t realize were happening. Discovering the changes when you re-read your journal can cheer you up.
3. Keep your lists with you: the support group members, the alternative activities, and the positive self-talk messages. Read them over when a craving hits and use your support team.
4. Drink lots of water to flush the toxins out of your body. Do not skip meals.
5. Begin a mild to moderate exercise program.
6. Plan a reward for every day that you do not use tobacco and give that reward to yourself on that day.
7. Brag on what you’ve accomplished. Friends, family, and co-workers will be thrilled to know you are not using tobacco. Steer clear from any discussions about your old bad behavior and concentrate on what you’ve accomplished. If friends and family want to nag or rehash the past, avoid them.
8. Continue to avoid all activities, locations, or people where there is tobacco use. This won’t be forever. The only thing you are giving up is nicotine, but there is no need to invite temptation right now.
9. Remember, you are giving something up in order to get something more precious. Revel in the clean, fresh smell of your skin, your clothes, your hair, your car, and your house. Notice how much better everything tastes and smells. By now you’ve discovered that your mouth does not taste like the bottom of a birdcage when you awaken in the morning, and that’s really cool! Also note that you are breathing more easily, that your hands and feet are less cold, and that you have more energy.

### Success

Nicotine is a serious addiction and, like all serious addictions, success is measured one day at a time. Adopt a realistic and measurable yardstick of daily, weekly, and monthly successes. In the beginning, celebrate your freedom from tobacco hourly, daily, and weekly. In these early days of the battle, if you see victory in terms of quitting forever, you are more likely to give up. By taking it one day at a time you can make it to 90 days. At 90 days, you have a 90% chance of staying tobacco free. Only you will know when nicotine no longer has any power over you.

### Lapses and Relapses

The process of quitting tobacco will be a bit different for each person. The amount of tobacco used daily and the years of usage are also important factors in that process. Quitting “cold turkey” has the highest success rate, but the withdrawal symptoms may be more severe. If you slip up and use, you are hooked again. That’s the fact of nicotine addiction. However, do not accept this as failure. Set up another quit date and stick to it. Use what you’ve learned. Step up the campaign by choosing a more rigorous plan of action. Check out local tobacco cessation programs and go online to check out the resources there. The average number of tries per successful quitter is four. You can do four. You may not recognize victory, but you can recognize failure. And failure is simply never trying again to quit.

---

For more information on tobacco cessation, please visit:  
[www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLuk9O0E/b.22931/k.8550/Smoking\\_Cessation\\_Support.htm](http://www.lungusa.org/site/pp.asp?c=dvLuk9O0E/b.22931/k.8550/Smoking_Cessation_Support.htm)