



NICOTINE DEPENDENCE & ADDICTION: HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

WHAT IS NICOTINE?

Nicotine is the drug in tobacco that causes dependence. Nicotine addiction, or dependence, is the most common form of chemical dependency in the nation. Research suggests nicotine is equally as addictive as heroin, cocaine, and alcohol.

Every smoker is addicted to a different combination of the stimulants in cigarettes, making their personal experience with smoking and nicotine dependence unique. A stimulant is the addictive property in a cigarette that makes you crave more.

PHYSICAL EFFECTS

- When you first start smoking, you may experience nausea, dizziness, headache, or upset stomach.
 - As your smoking becomes more of a habit, you build up a tolerance to these effects.
- Routine smoking causes our bodies to adapt to having a certain level of nicotine. Without realizing it, we regulate the number of cigarettes we smoke in order to maintain our bodies' familiarized nicotine level.
- Our tolerance to the unpleasant effects of nicotine allows us to focus on the pleasurable effects nicotine delivers.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

After the habit of smoking is established, we feel as though we need to smoke to feel normal.

- We begin to connect our smoking routines with many of our daily and social activities, creating triggers, making it hard to do those activities without smoking.
 - For example, associating a cigarette with a cup of coffee or talking on the phone.
- We usually are not aware of the psychological effects of smoking. The triggers, the feelings of relaxation, stress reduction, focus, etc., become automatic.

NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL

When you do not smoke for a period of time, you can experience unpleasant physical and psychological side effects. Side effects are dependent on your experience with smoking (how long, often, much, etc.) and varies person to person. Symptoms of nicotine withdrawal can begin anywhere from 2 hours to 2-3 days after your last cigarette.

WITHDRAWAL EFFECTS INCLUDE:

- ✓ Cravings for nicotine
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Weight gain
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Problems concentrating
- ✓ Drowsiness or trouble sleeping
- ✓ Feeling tense, restless or frustrated



To relieve these withdrawal symptoms, you can use prescription or over-the-counter products that contain small amounts of nicotine to lessen withdrawal symptoms during the quitting process.

HOW DOES THE BODY BECOME DEPENDENT ON NICOTINE?

Nicotine affects many parts of the body. It changes how the body uses food (metabolism), causes our heart to beat faster, our pulse to quicken, it increases our blood pressure, and our veins begin to tighten causing blood flow throughout the body to become more difficult.

- Nicotine works by stimulating our nervous system to release specific chemical messengers that impacts different parts of our brain and body.
 - The buzz you feel is the release of epinephrine (adrenaline) which stimulates the body and causes your blood pressure and heart rate to increase, and makes you breathe harder.
 - Nicotine activates the release of dopamine. When nicotine is inhaled, it is thought to be the source of the pleasurable sensations you experience when smoking, which can include relaxation, a buzz, and relief of tension.

After you have smoked a few times, nicotine begins to weaken your ability to feel pleasure, causing you to need more nicotine in order to sustain the good feelings.



Routine smoking causes our bodies to adapt to having a certain level of nicotine. Without realizing it, we regulate the number of cigarettes we smoke in order to maintain our bodies' familiarized nicotine level.

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