

Winter 2020

AHEC ROAD MAPS

Tips for Your Journey to
Tobacco Freedom

Sponsored by the Florida State University Area Health Education Center and State of Florida, Department of Health

TOBACCO CESSATION

by: Andrée Aubrey & Alexis Trapani

Nearly 40 million adults in the United States are smoking cigarettes. Although new smokers start every day, about 70% of smokers want to quit! And individuals who are living with mental illness and substance use disorders are just as interested in quitting. The effects of smoking can cause serious medical problems from lung cancer to a weakened immune system. When you inhale cigarette smoke, you are inhaling toxins that cause damage to your body making it harder for it to work properly and fight off any germs that you come across. As Coronavirus is still easily spread, having a weak immune system will cause your chances of getting COVID-19 to be higher. The virus is known to attack the lungs which is also what the toxins from cigarettes are attacking. This can make it harder for your body to fight off the virus or any other infection.

Quitting in the middle of a pandemic may feel like it would be too challenging but there are resources to help you become a successful quitter. With our lives moving at a slower pace, now may be a good time to give quitting a try. Nicotine Replacement Therapies (such as gum, lozenges, or patches) can help you when experiencing withdrawal symptoms*. Smokers are being encouraged to stop smoking now more than ever. Tobacco Free Florida and its Area Health Education Centers (AHECs) now offer virtual Group Quit classes, making it a lot easier for you to find a path to tobacco freedom that fits your life. The content of sessions is still the same as in person classes.

To learn more about Group Quit, visit www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway or call 1-877-848-6696. Classes are available in all 67 counties across the state and virtual classes are via Zoom.

*Based on what is medically appropriate

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¹ Council for Tobacco Treatment Training Programs (CTTTP) Honors National Online Recovery Day Statement

² CDC; MMWR / January 6, 2017 / Vol. 65 / No. 52

³ Tobacco Free Florida: www.tobaccofreeflorida.com



NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

by: Alexis Trapani, BA

During the quitting process, you may experience withdrawal symptoms. It is important to know that these symptoms are temporary! It is part of the process that your body is going through as you are no longer getting the dose of nicotine your brain and your body have become used to. Here are some different symptoms one might experience as well as some tips on how to deal with them. These tips also can be helpful to ease the symptoms and improve your success.

To get your **FREE NRT***, visit tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway or call **1-877-822-6669** to talk to a Quit Coach who will help you assess your addiction and create a personalized quit plan.

*if medically appropriate and 18 years of age or older.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is a treatment that can be given to you that will help you to quit smoking. This can be in the form of gum, patches, or lozenges. This treatment reduces the level of nicotine that a person is getting to eventually stop the nicotine altogether. The low dosage of nicotine will help ease the smoker into a tobacco-free lifestyle.

¹ "Nicotine Withdrawal Future." Tobacco Free Florida, tobaccofreeflorida.com/ready-to-quit-smoking/nicotine-withdrawal-symptoms/.

² "Nicotine Replacement Therapies." Tobacco Free Florida, 19 Nov. 2019, tobaccofreeflorida.com/how-to-quit-tobacco/nicotine-replacement-therapy/.



TROUBLE SLEEPING

Drink some herbal tea or try some breathing exercises that help slow down your breathing. Slowing down your breathing can help you to relax your mind and body to get ready for sleep.



SLEEPINESS

Try exercising. This will help wake you up and distract your mind from the symptoms.



IRRITABILITY

This is caused by the body withdrawing from the nicotine. Try to distract your mind by reading a book, cleaning, etc.



PERSPIRATION

Sweating is a natural way of getting rid of any toxins in the body. Be sure to drink lots of water to keep yourself hydrated.



ITCHY HANDS AND FEET

This is due to the poor blood flow caused by toxins in the cigarettes. Try taking a walk or some simple exercises to help increase the blood flow to lower the feeling of being itchy. Just a few minutes a day will make a difference.



HUNGER

Keep healthy snacks all around you and create a balanced diet. This will help avoid weight gain and get all the nutrients your body needs to heal.



CRAVINGS

The most common symptom smokers experience in the process of quitting. You may feel the need to smoke at various times throughout the day (or night). Try distracting your mind by telling yourself you can wait just 2 or 5 more minutes, cleaning, reading a book or magazine, taking a little walk etc. Using the NRT gum or lozenges is very helpful when dealing with cravings.



CONSTIPATION

Add fiber to your diet like apples or carrot sticks. It will help you to be more regular and may help you lose weight too!

CLIENT SPOTLIGHT: Raymond B.

In August of 2019, Raymond got the idea to stop smoking. Even though he was motivated to quit, he was still a bit anxious due to the stress he was having in his life and getting back on SSI. He was concerned that these struggles were going to affect his journey to becoming a successful quitter. After taking a step back, he realized how much of his time and money was being spent on tobacco products and decided that enough was enough. Raymond joined a group quit class and enjoyed the support he was receiving. The group class helped him to understand that he was not the only one going through the same struggles. This feeling gave him even more motivation to stay on track. Attending the Quit Smoking Now class helped give him a sense of responsibility while using Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help him wean off his nicotine habit.

Raymond has remained tobacco free ever since his decision to quit. He has overcome the challenges of a hurricane and now the Coronavirus pandemic. He would have never been able to be where he is today without his supportive relationship with his facilitator, Carol. She has helped him be more present and enjoy the little gifts life brings.

Ever since quitting, Raymond feels like he has more energy than before. This has helped him to create new routines to support his healthier lifestyle. With all the energy he has again, he has put it towards different activities like riding his bike, fishing, cooking and working on his garden. Because he no longer spends money on nicotine, he was able to save that money and use it to buy new things that bring him joy or offer new experiences.

Raymond recommends the class to friends and relatives who are interested in becoming a former smoker as well. The techniques he has learned through his class as well as through his facilitator have helped him deal with cravings to the point where he can be around those who smoke and not give in.



TOBACCO TREATMENT SPECIALIST SPOTLIGHT: Carol Knight

Carol Knight is a Tobacco Treatment Specialist at the West Florida Area Health Education Center. For the past 6 years, she has been helping smokers on their journey to freedom from tobacco. She creates a safe space for those quitting to share their stories and struggles, making sure they are heard and accepted. Carol lets smokers take control of their journey while staying in the background, guiding them towards a path to success when they become unsure of the direction or just need a final push to meet their goals. An acronym that she likes to use is F.E.A.R. which stands for Face Everything And Rise. Carol not only motivates them to quit smoking, but to live a better and healthier lifestyle.



I was vaping even before I came in the door when I first got here. I knew the consequences were bad. Since I have been on the patch I haven't had the urge or desire to smoke.

- Anonymous

DISTRACTIONS

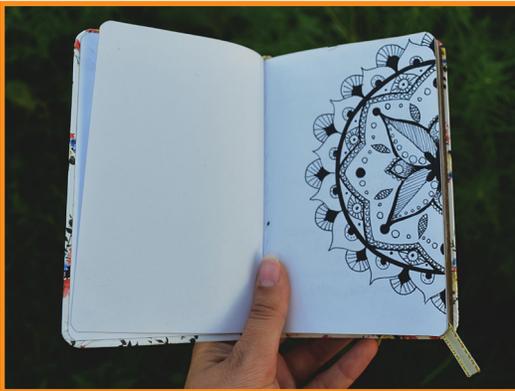
by: Alexis Trapani, BA

With COVID-19 numbers steadily rising, it is important to continue to wear a mask, wash your hands, and stay home unless you need food or essentials from the store. Keeping a physical distance from others may lead to boredom for many of us. If you're struggling to find something to do at home, here are some ideas to help keep you busy.



GARDENING

Many people have taken up gardening to try and grow fresh fruits and vegetables to eat healthier (and eating healthier can help when it comes to quitting smoking). The stump from romaine lettuce can be used to grow more lettuce. Place the stump in a jar or cup that is filled halfway with water. Once you start to notice leaves growing, plant it in soil for it to grow. Watering it every day can be a great reminder to take care of yourself.



ZENTANGLES

Drawing is a great way to feel stress-free and relaxed. You start with an outline of the space you are going to draw in and create different patterns to come together as one piece. Shading is encouraged to help give the drawing some definition. Start out with a small pattern and work yourself up to more complex designs. For videos and tips to get started on drawing, you can visit <https://zentangle.com/pages/get-started>.



KNIT OR CROCHET

When quitting smoking, the feeling of holding something in your hand can help with any urges you have to start up again. You'll be able to keep your mind and your hands busy to help pass the time until your urge goes away. To get started, try searching for "How To" videos on YouTube.



JOURNAL

Our thoughts and feelings as we deal with the pandemic will be valuable to historians in the future. You can learn more about your tobacco triggers just by writing about what you are doing and how you are feeling at the time. A great way to practice gratitude is if you record one thing each day (or each week if this is a struggle for you) that you are grateful for.

TOBACCO ADDICTION & NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS (NAMI): WHERE THEY STAND AND WHAT THEY'RE DOING

BY: Rebecca Carter

NAMI is committed to supporting wellness of people with mental illness and in recovery in every way possible. They recognize that tobacco use is a dangerous form of addiction creating significant health problems for the population. Smoking increases stigma and has been inappropriately accepted, and even encouraged, in therapeutic settings by using it as a form of coercion and reward. People with mental illness and those in recovery have the right to be tobacco free and must be given the educational tools and support to make healthy choices in their lives.

NAMI encourages tobacco free environments and is calling upon mental health providers to implement educational and tobacco cessation programs to help consumers stop and avoid tobacco addiction. Facilities instituting tobacco free policies must provide effective treatment and support to consumers as well as providers and staff who use tobacco.

While some professionals do not believe in tobacco cessation services combined with mental health, NAMI encourages it. People living with mental illnesses are more likely to have a tobacco addiction problem compared to those who do not have any mental illness. "NAMI further supports incorporating tobacco usage in the definition of dual diagnosis; integration of mental health care and overall health care; more effective research at all levels on smoking, tobacco addiction and mental health treatment; and funding (including Medicaid and other public sources) to provide access to effective smoking prevention, cessation and recovery".

¹ Public Policy Platform of The National Alliance on Mental Illness. https://www.nami.org/NAMI/media/NAMI-Media/downloads/Public-Policy-Platform_9-22-14.pdf

LETTER OF APPRECIATION

I would like to share my appreciation for your quit smoking classes. I know I never could have quit without it. My group leader, Naomi, has been wonderful and never gave up on me. It has been 16 months since my last cigarette. The change from in-person classes to the zoom classes has been especially helpful since I don't have a car and it was always an effort to get to class. There are times when I feel I will break, so I sign up for the class and get reassured I can get through it. I have a procedure coming up for my lungs and quitting smoking was necessary. Thanks to your class, I am in the process of setting that up.

Again, thank you for being there for me,

*-Ramona T
Okaloosa County*

MY QUIT DAY

Write down the first day you quit smoking. Keeping track of the day will help you to mark milestones as time goes by. If quitting long term seems like too much for you, encourage yourself to try quitting for a short period of time like 2 or 3 days. Mini quitting periods can help bring you closer to quitting for good.

Don't get discouraged and feel bad about relapsing! It is part of the learning process of how to distance yourself from tobacco use. If you do relapse, it is important to accept it and look back on what made you use tobacco again. Understanding these triggers can help you the next time you want to try quitting. Knowing what works and what does not can lead you on the right track to become a successful quitter! Remember to take advantage of the services from www.tobaccofreeflorida.com or call 1-877-822-6669. You can order Nicotine Replacement Therapy directly from the website which will help you if you decide to try to practice quit for a day or two.

The will to quit smoking is helping me. In the lifestyle I see for myself, there is no room for cigarettes or smoking. I don't want it anymore. It is nasty and it stinks. My son tells me all the time that it is bad. I am no longer short winded and I don't wake up in the middle of the night to smoke. I feel great.

-Josh C.

In this program I have come to love myself again. My family is on-board with me. It has taught me breathing skills and coping skills. I have learned to change a negative into a positive. My life is now on the plus side of the gas tank. I have got a lot out of this and overall I got my life back.

-Cody B

When I arrived at the facility I smoked a lot. I was like a "chew chew" train smoking 3 packs a day. I wasted a lot of money. My breath smelled bad, my teeth were yellow and my lungs felt like they were going to collapse. My lungs are now better and my teeth are whiter. The nicotine patches and gum helped a lot. Cravings went away and I don't feel like I need it anymore.

-Felix K.

DEAR PROFESSOR:

Do you have any tips about using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)?

PROFESSOR: Absolutely!

- Nicotine gum is not like regular gum. It is not meant to be chewed continuously. It is to be broken open with the teeth and then parked between the cheek and gums. If constantly chewed the juices go to the stomach where it is too acidic for the nicotine to be absorbed properly.
- Do not cut patches. The medication is not uniformly distributed throughout the patch.
- Change the patch at the same time each day.
- Wear the patch overnight to decrease morning cravings that tend to be the strongest.
- Having a “slip” and smoking a cigarette while wearing a patch will NOT lead to spontaneous combustion or an instant heart attack. The average cigarette has 1 – 3 mg of nicotine and the patch is slow release with the strongest patch releasing 21mg of nicotine over 24 hours. Smoking while wearing a patch is not recommended because it is preserving the “habit” of smoking behavior and you want to be sure not to consume too much nicotine.
- Ideally, a quit date should be set and NRT use should begin after the last cigarette has been smoked. An alternative idea is cutting down on the number of cigarettes you smoke (for example, going from 20 cigarettes per day to 10 per day) and using NRT to supplement when cravings come. However, you must continue to cut down on the cigarettes gradually or this method will not work. You want to be sure not to give your body more nicotine than it was getting from the cigarettes alone.



BRIGITTA J. CINTRON
PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT
FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Brigitta Cintron is a nationally certified and Florida licensed Physician Assistant and a Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist with over ten years of experience treating tobacco dependence. She is a founding faculty member of the FSU School of P.A. Practice.



When I came in I was smoking 1 ½ packs a day. I was worried about not being able to smoke. The patches and gum have helped a lot to make the cravings go away. It changed my life because I haven't smoked in 58 days. My breathing is noticeably different. I used to constantly lose my breath and now I don't even notice it. My hygiene is better too. I don't smell like a cigarette.

- Daniel H.



QUIT YOUR WAY

Quitting tobacco isn't easy. Finding help should be.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, quitting is more important than ever! Let us help you get the support you need from the comfort of your own home.

The FL Area Health Education Center Network
is offering free group quit classes virtually!

Pre-registration required!

Call **877-848-6696** to register.

You will be emailed a link to join by ZOOM conference via video or audio. Cessation groups cover all forms of tobacco.

Benefits include nicotine replacement patches, gum or lozenges.

(if medically appropriate for those 18 years of age or older)

and participant workbook and materials.

More than **DOUBLES** your chances of success!

For more information, visit us at:
www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/quityourway

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