

# Nicotine Dependence

## WHY IS NICOTINE SO ADDICTIVE?



Nicotine is very addictive for two reasons: it is fast acting, and it gives relief from withdrawal. It takes only 8 seconds after inhaling for the nicotine to reach your brain. Once nicotine reaches the brain, it causes the release of a chemical (dopamine) that promotes feelings of pleasure. This quick, pleasurable effect makes smoking rewarding, which makes people want to smoke even more. Unfortunately, the more you smoke, the more dependent your body becomes on the nicotine to feel good.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO MY NICOTINE DEPENDENCE WHEN I QUIT SMOKING

Quitting smoking involves breaking your body's dependence on nicotine. When your body goes without nicotine, you experience **withdrawal** symptoms such as irritability, sadness, difficulty sleeping, decreased concentration, tension, hunger, and urges to smoke. Providing your body with nicotine (like when you have a cigarette) can reduce these symptoms. This is why nicotine replacement products such as nicotine patches or gum work - because they supply the nicotine your body is craving, reduce withdrawal symptoms, and allow you to focus on learning to be a nonsmoker.



## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP BREAK MY DEPENDENCE ON NICOTINE?

Using the nicotine patch every day as directed will help reduce your withdrawal symptoms and gradually wean your body from nicotine. This is not all that it takes, however. You must still learn to resist the urge to smoke.

