



FACTSHEET: THE BENEFITS OF STOPPING SMOKING

Stopping smoking is the best thing you can do to improve your health. And you don't have to wait long for the benefits to start once you stop. After...

- **20 minutes** Blood pressure and pulse return to normal
- **8 hours** Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in the blood are halved
- **24 hours** Carbon monoxide will be eliminated from the body and lungs will have started to clear out the tar that's been clogging them up
- **48 hours** No nicotine left in the body. The ability to taste and smell improves
- **72 hours** Breathing becomes easier and energy levels increase
- **2-12 weeks** Circulation improves and exercise can be easier
- **3-9 months** Coughing and wheezing decline
- **5 years** The risk of having a heart attack reduces by half compared to that of a smoker
- **10 years** The risk of lung cancer falls to about half that of a smoker

And the financial benefits of stopping smoking soon add up...

- **1 day** (£7) Two movie rentals, a new lipstick, download a new album
- **1 week** (£49) A family cinema trip, a pair of shoes, a meal for two
- **1 month** (£210) A shopping spree, premiership football tickets, a weekend break
- **3 months** (£630) A designer handbag, a new laptop, the latest flat screen TV
- **6 months** (£1,260) A leather suite, a home cinema, a top of the range bicycle
- **1 year** (£2,555) A new kitchen, designer jewellery, a holiday of a lifetime

Withdrawal symptoms and how to cope

Craving

Craving is an intense desire to smoke which becomes less frequent over the first four weeks. The craving is mainly caused by the withdrawal of nicotine.

Coping tips: Anything from taking a few long, slow, deep breaths, drink a glass of water or do a crossword or Sudoku can help. And glucose tablets can help too.

Coughing

This is often worse in the beginning. It is caused by the body clearing out the tar from your lungs.

Coping tips: A warm drink can ease the cough. Coughing post quitting smoking is a good sign, as it shows the lungs are recovering.

Hunger

Some people feel extremely hungry. This is due to changes in the metabolism, and the fact that food tastes better once they've stopped smoking.

Coping tips: Encourage them to keep some healthy snacks such as dried or fresh fruits on their desk and drink extra water.

Changes in bowel movement

Symptoms include constipation or diarrhoea

Coping tips: Ex-smokers should drink more clear fluids and be more physically active. A diet high in fibre and fruit would also help.

Disturbed sleep

When quitting smoking the normal sleeping pattern can be disturbed. It should get back to normal within a month. The sleep disturbance is caused by the nicotine leaving your body. However, some people find that they sleep much better after stopping smoking.

Coping tips: Doing more physical activity can improve sleep patterns. Encourage them to be active at lunchtime and to cut down on coffee, tea and cola drinks.

Dizziness

Some people occasionally feel dizzy in the first few days after stopping smoking. This happens when more oxygen starts getting to the brain instead of carbon monoxide. This is a positive sign. The body will soon adjust and the dizziness usually passes after a few days.

Coping tips: If someone is feeling dizzy, get them to sit down and drink some water.

Mood swings, inability to concentrate or feeling irritable

These are emotional signs of nicotine withdrawal, and show that the body is missing the chemicals and stimulation of smoking.

Coping tips: The individual needs to figure out some coping mechanisms that work for them. It's good telling their line manager and colleagues that they might experience these withdrawal symptoms, and ask for their support.

For more information and tips on quitting smoking order our booklet Stop smoking (G118/0512) at bhf.org.uk/publications.

Weight gain, diet and physical activity

Many people who want to stop smoking are concerned about the possibility of putting on weight. Remind employees that a small amount of weight gain is a minor health risk compared with the risks of continuing smoking. If they eat healthily and keep physically active, they're unlikely to put on too much extra weight. Once they've stopped smoking for a while, hopefully you will find it easier to lose any extra weight.

Why people can put on weight when they stop smoking:

- Nicotine use has suppressed their natural appetite and increased their metabolism.
- They find that food tastes better after they quit smoking, and so they eat more.
- They replace cigarettes with snacks and sweets, or eat more than they used to.

Tips how to avoid putting on weight:

- Eat a balanced diet and avoid high-calorie or fried foods.
- Keep healthy snacks within reach at work
- Become regularly physically active for at least 10 minutes at a time

For more information and tips on being physically active and eating healthily order our booklets Get active, stay active (G12/1212) and Eating well (G186/1112) at bhf.org.uk/publications.

**MISSION VERY
POSSIBLE!**

