

TOBACCO & NICOTINE USE TREATMENT WORKBOOK

A Resource for Veterans



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This workbook for Veterans was updated and adapted from the “My Tobacco Cessation Workbook.” It was developed for Veterans actively participating in in-person, telephone, or telehealth-based treatment programs within the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). It is intended to be paired with supplemental medication and counseling patient treatment guides and condition- and product-specific patient handouts available on the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) website: mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/

The original provider manual Primary Care & Tobacco Cessation and the accompanying “My Tobacco Cessation Workbook” were developed by Julianne Himstreet, Pharm.D., BCPS. The U.S. Public Health Service Clinical Practice Guideline and the treatment model described by Richard Brown provided the foundation for their work and therefore indirectly ours as well.^{1,2}

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¹ Brown, R. A. (2003). Intensive behavioral treatment. In D. B. Abrams, R. Niaura, R. Brown, K. M. Emmons, M. G. Goldstein, & P. M. Monti, The tobacco dependence treatment handbook: A guide to best practices (pp. 118-177). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

² Fiore MC, Jaén CR, Baker TB, et al. (2008). Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update. Clinical Practice Guideline. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service. May 2008.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on taking the first step to stopping nicotine and tobacco use!¹ Whether you smoke cigarettes, cigars, or pipes; use chewing tobacco or dip; vape; or use other commercial nicotine products, VA can help you live a tobacco- and nicotine-free life.

Use of commercial nicotine and tobacco products can lead to nicotine addiction, or dependence. People who are addicted to nicotine experience withdrawal without the drug, which can include symptoms like cravings and irritability. Long-term use of these products can have other physical and mental health effects. **Stopping tobacco use is the best thing you can do to improve your health!**

If you have tried to stop before and have not been successful, don't give up! Research shows that it typically takes 6 or more attempts for someone to stop successfully. Consider each attempt practice for the next and use what you have learned to make more progress every time. For example, you may find that certain medications work better for you than others. Or you may have learned that there are certain daily activities or settings that make it more difficult to resist picking up a cigarette, grabbing your vape, or dipping or chewing.

So, what is the best way to become nicotine-free? The best way is to use **behavioral techniques** to help you break the routine and develop new behaviors, **along with medications** to help you manage nicotine withdrawal symptoms. This workbook, written for Veterans, will assist you in changing your daily behavior and routines so that you can leave nicotine and tobacco in your past.

¹ Commercial tobacco- and nicotine-containing products are intended for recreational human use. These do not include medical forms of nicotine such as the nicotine patch. "Tobacco" in this document refers to commercial tobacco and nicotine-containing products and does not include tobacco used for sacred and traditional practices by some American Indian and Alaska Native communities.



Quick Tip

Download the VA Stay Quit Coach Mobile Application at mobile.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach and use it to track your changes in use as you progress through treatment.

This app includes tools and support you can use to reduce or stop use of tobacco and nicotine. Keep an eye out for the Stay Quit Coach logo for tips on how you can use the app for additional support.



Scan for more information

WHY DO I WANT TO STOP TOBACCO AND NICOTINE USE?

The first step in cessation of use of any addictive drug, including nicotine, is to determine why you want to stop.

Mark off the reasons you want to stop using tobacco:

To breathe better

To reduce my risk of cancer

To reduce my risk of heart attack and stroke

To reduce my risk of emphysema/chronic bronchitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

My doctor or dentist recommended stopping

I have sores or white patches in my mouth

To look and smell better

To improve my sense of smell and taste

To save money

It's affecting my mood, making me more irritable

I want to reduce my impact on the environment

I don't want to be exposed to such high levels of nicotine anymore

It's banned at my work or school

For my pets

Baby on the way

To set a good example for my children/
grandchildren

To have a better future

To take back control over my life



*You can also add
your reasons to
stop in the Stay Quit
Coach app.*

What are other reasons you want to stop? Write these reasons below:

CHAPTER 2: WHY DO I USE NICOTINE?

NICOTINE USE IS LINKED TO OTHER BEHAVIORS

Nicotine use is associated with several different behaviors that are very closely related. Nicotine use is a **learned behavior**, meaning you learned this from your family, friends, magazine ads, television, movies, or during your military service. Many Veterans start using tobacco and nicotine during their service to deal with periods of boredom and stress, or as a social outlet during breaks. Who or what started your use?

Think about how often you might take a hit from a vape, drag on a cigarette, or use a pouch in a day. Some Veterans have used tobacco for years and, over time, it becomes more ingrained in your daily life routines, which can make stopping difficult. Nicotine use is also a **triggered behavior**, meaning certain activities, situations or times of day may make you think about having a cigarette or chewing tobacco.

Check off some of your triggers for using nicotine:

- Social situations, like parties
- Seeing someone else use, smoke, dip, vape, etc., in-person or on TV
- Drinking alcohol or going to a bar
- Using cannabis or other drugs
- Being on my phone
- After meals
- Chronic pain
- Waking up during the night, having nightmares
- Driving or walking
- During downtime or between activities
- After sex
- Watching TV
- Waiting for a bus or a ride
- Before bedtime

Working or studying
Drinking coffee
Feeling irritable if I haven't used in a while
Feeling strong cravings
Waking up in the morning
Having a hard time concentrating
Stress or feeling overwhelmed
Feeling anxious, angry or impatient
Feeling happiness or excitement
Sadness, feeling down or depressed
Feeling lonely or bored

Write down other triggers you may have:

A CHALLENGE FOR YOU: ADDRESSING YOUR TRIGGERS

Try not using any tobacco or nicotine products during one of your triggers. For example, if you typically smoke after eating breakfast, you might try not smoking for 10 minutes after breakfast starting tomorrow. Wait 20 minutes to smoke after breakfast the next day. Wait 30 minutes the day after that. Add another 10 minutes each day. By the end of the week, you will be waiting one hour between the trigger and smoking. Once you have tackled one trigger, try adding another trigger until you have a few of them managed.

By adding time between the trigger and the action of using a tobacco or nicotine product, the trigger becomes weaker. This will help when you get to your quit day. If you use chewing tobacco or nicotine pouches, or if you vape, you can do the same thing by looking at your triggers to use tobacco or nicotine. To help you avoid using nicotine, come up with a few things you can do instead.

Some examples would be:

- Going for a walk
- Using a substitute like chewing gum or candy
- Doing deep breathing exercises (see page 21)

A more complete list of substitute behaviors can be found under [***DEADS Strategy***](#) on page 22.

Write down 3 of your triggers and what you will do instead:

1. Trigger:

Instead of using nicotine, I will:

2. Trigger:

Instead of using nicotine, I will:

3. Trigger:

Instead of using nicotine, I will:

Lastly, nicotine use is also an **automatic behavior**, meaning you may find you use nicotine without thinking about it. If you smoke, you may recall times when you lit a cigarette and then noticed you already had one lit – or times when you took a hit from your vape without even thinking about it.

There are a few ways to help reduce this automatic behavior:

Tip #1 Move your tobacco or nicotine product to a different location

- If you carry your cigarettes in your front pocket, put them on the kitchen counter. If you smoke outside, take one cigarette with you instead of the whole pack. You will need to physically walk to the pack to smoke the next cigarette. This leads you to think about smoking that cigarette and possibly consider whether you really need it or if you can wait longer to have the next one.
- If you keep your vape in your pocket, try leaving it somewhere else, like in your car or a location in your house (inaccessible to children and pets), so you need to physically retrieve it to vape.

If you use chewing tobacco or nicotine pouches, try placing the can on the kitchen counter or another location in the house, rather than in your pocket. You will need to walk to the location of the can before putting in a new plug of chew or placing a new pouch.

Tip #2 Keep track of your use

- Track your tobacco and nicotine use on a sheet of paper you keep in your pocket or in your pack of cigarettes. Note the number of times you use each day, including number of cigarettes, dips, pouches, vapes, or other products used.
- Each time you use nicotine, note on your tracker the time of day, your mood at that time (e.g., happy, bored, angry, etc.) and your level of need for nicotine (e.g., low, medium, high).
- Keeping track of your use helps you work on the automatic behavior. You can see if changes in your mood cause you to use more or less. Many people find that they smoke more when they are unhappy, while others might find they smoke more when they are bored. Times of celebration may be a situation when your tobacco use might increase. You may find that you smoke more when you are around certain friends who also smoke.



Use the Stay Quit Coach app to log and track your use over time.

CHAPTER 3: NICOTINE ADDICTION

WHAT IS NICOTINE?

Nicotine is a substance found naturally in tobacco that causes feelings of pleasure, relaxation or stimulation, and stress reduction. Nicotine is addictive: using tobacco and other commercial nicotine products creates a buzz of pleasure and energy. When this buzz fades, it can leave you wanting more. Over time, your body can build up a tolerance to nicotine, which means you need more nicotine to get the same buzz. When you don't get nicotine, you may have withdrawal symptoms like cravings and irritability.

Nicotine addiction in itself is harmful, it can take control of your daily life and affect your mood and behavior. Some other effects of nicotine include:

- Nicotine dependence and withdrawal can worsen symptoms of depression and anxiety.
- Nicotine use may contribute to heart attacks if you have heart disease.
- The brain continues to develop into your mid-20s. Exposure to nicotine can harm brain development, especially in the areas involved with attention, learning, and memory.
- For those who are pregnant, nicotine exposure can cause harm to the fetus, such as impaired brain and lung development and increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).



Did you know?

High levels of nicotine can be toxic, particularly for children and pets. Eating, drinking, or absorbing it can lead to nicotine poisoning symptoms like nausea, vomiting, and, in some cases, difficulty breathing, seizures, and loss of consciousness.

WHAT PRODUCTS DELIVER NICOTINE?

All commercial nicotine and tobacco products deliver nicotine. Nicotine may be inhaled through the lungs, absorbed through the lining of the mouth, or absorbed through the skin.

- Smoke from **cigarettes and other combustible products (e.g., cigars)** is inhaled and nicotine is delivered through the lungs into the blood very quickly. Blood nicotine levels then rapidly decline, causing withdrawal and the urge to smoke another cigarette.
- **Smokeless tobacco products (e.g., dip, chew, snus)** deliver nicotine through the lining of the mouth, and results in a slower and steadier rise in the blood nicotine level, which remains higher for a longer period than when smoking cigarettes.

- Nicotine or nicotine-like chemicals can also be found in **commercial products labeled “tobacco-free,” such as vapes and nicotine pouches.** Some commercial products contain very high levels of nicotine. Scientists are still trying to understand the long-term effects that the high nicotine content in these products has on the body.

Aside from commercial nicotine and tobacco products, there are also certain medical products that deliver nicotine.

- **Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) are medical products** that deliver controlled amounts of nicotine to help you stop using commercial nicotine and tobacco products. NRT products include the nicotine patch, gum, lozenges, and nasal spray. It is important to only use nicotine products that are approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to stop tobacco use. These products go through rigorous testing and review to make sure that they are safe and effective before they can be used in treatment. In contrast to commercial products, **NRTs are specifically designed to reduce nicotine dependence over time, to help manage withdrawal symptoms while you stop, and to be used for a limited time period.**

COPING WITH NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL

Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances on earth; this is why it is so hard to stop using. Nicotine is metabolized rapidly within your body and you will feel a need to use tobacco or nicotine when levels drop. If you go for long periods of time between cigarettes or use of other products, such as sleeping through the night, you can expect to have a strong craving to smoke or use nicotine.

You might feel the following effects when you are in nicotine withdrawal:

- Irritability, frustration, anger
- Anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating
- Restlessness
- Depressed mood
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increased appetite
- Coughing
- Runny nose
- Cravings/urges

Many of these symptoms start the first or second day after you stop use. They are at their worst in the first week and will get better with time. Most symptoms disappear after 2-4 weeks, but the urge to smoke or use nicotine can stay with you for a long time. The urge to use nicotine will be stronger when you first stop use and seem to last minutes. However, after the first 2-4 weeks, the urges will become shorter. For most people the urge lasts only seconds after they have been free from use for a month or longer. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms can be managed by certain medications and behavioral coping strategies.

Table 1. Behavioral Strategies for Coping with Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms

| Withdrawal Symptoms | What Can I Do About It? |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Irritability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid stress • Practice relaxation techniques • Exercise |
| Depressed mood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do something fun • Get support from family and friends • Discuss with your medical provider |
| Difficulty concentrating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid stress • Plan your work accordingly |
| Dizziness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get up slowly from sitting position |
| Chest tightness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice relaxation techniques |
| Fatigue | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get more sleep • Take naps • Don't push yourself |
| Hunger | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink lots of water • Eat low-calorie snacks |
| Stomach pain, constipation, gas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink fluids • Eat fruits and vegetables |
| Cough, dry throat, runny nose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink fluids • Eat sugar-free candy • Use cough drops |
| Difficulty sleeping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce caffeine consumption (e.g., reduce daily intake by 50%) |

OTHER SUBSTANCES IN TOBACCO AND NICOTINE PRODUCTS AFFECT YOUR BODY

Tobacco can be harmful to every part of your body. Certain substances naturally found in tobacco and other substances formed when tobacco is burned can harm your body. There are more than 7,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke, including more than 70 that are harmful to humans and can cause cell damage, cell death and cancer. Even though it is not burned, smokeless tobacco also contains some of these harmful chemicals, including at least 30 that cause cancer. Other products and devices that deliver nicotine, including vapes, have been shown to contain chemicals that can damage your health.

Many of these problems can be completely or almost completely reversed if you stop use. Here is a list of the most common problems of tobacco use from your head to your toes:



Head

- Stroke (blockage or breaking of a blood vessel in the brain)
- Mouth and throat cancers
- Bad breath, cavities, and loss of teeth
- Decreased night vision
- Wrinkles and yellow staining of skin and teeth
- Nose congestion and infections
- Alzheimer's disease and other dementia
- Impaired brain function that makes it harder to focus on tasks and process information and faster long-term cognitive decline



Lungs

- Cancer (80-90% of all lung cancers are from smoking)
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema and chronic bronchitis
- Worsening of asthma
- Lung infections



Heart and circulatory system

- Congestive heart failure
- Heart attacks
- Increased blood pressure and heart rate
- Reduced circulation in arms, legs and feet that sometimes leads to amputations in severe cases – particularly among people with diabetes

Stomach/intestines

- Cancers
- Ulcers
- Heartburn

Pancreas

- Cancer

Learn more

[mentalhealth.va.gov/
quit-tobacco/why-quit.
asp#get-the-facts](https://mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/why-quit.asp#get-the-facts)



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information

Bones

- Increased bone thinning leading to a higher risk of broken bones

Reproductive/urinary system

- Cancers in kidneys, bladder and reproductive organs
- Erectile dysfunction in men and sexual dysfunction in women
- Fertility problems and early menopause in women

RECOVERY OF YOUR BODY AFTER STOPPING USE

It is never too late to stop nicotine and tobacco use. You will start seeing benefits the very first day you stop and these benefits will increase the longer you remain tobacco-free.

Research shows that stopping at any age improves your health. Less than three years free from tobacco smoke eliminates most of the increased risk for death that you had because of smoking—and men who stop by 40 years of age reduce the excess risk of death they had due to smoking by 90% (95% for women).

TIMELINE OF RECOVERY AFTER CESSATION OF USE

20 minutes after stopping

Reduction in your heart rate and blood pressure without nicotine exposure; the temperature of your hands and feet will start returning to normal.

12 hours after stopping

If you smoke tobacco, carbon monoxide level in your blood drops.

24 hours after stopping

Anxiety and irritability may start due to withdrawal from nicotine. These symptoms get better the longer you are tobacco-free.

2–3 days after stopping

Nerve endings in your body start to regenerate without exposure to tobacco smoke, and you may notice a return in your taste and smell. Breathing may be easier now.

Anger, anxiety and irritability from nicotine withdrawal may be at the worst level during this time. Nicotine replacement like the nicotine gum or lozenges can help with this.

1 week after stopping

Tobacco cravings and urges may be less frequent and shorter in duration.

2 weeks after stopping

Blood circulation in your gums and teeth are similar to that of someone who never smoked.

You should no longer have anger, anxiety and irritability from nicotine withdrawal. Cravings and urges should be shorter and less frequent.

1–3 months after stopping

Your heart attack risk has started to drop, and your lung function is improving. The blood circulation in your body has improved and walking might be easier. Give walking a try and see if you can go farther than when you were smoking. If you had a cough when you smoked, the cough should be gone now.

Mouth sores from smokeless tobacco begin to heal. Your mouth will typically return to normal appearance within 2-6 weeks.

1–9 months after stopping

Smoking-related nasal congestion, fatigue, and shortness of breath should be improving. Cilia (little hairs in the lungs, throat and nose) have re-grown in your lungs and can clean your lungs to remove irritants and mucous and reduce infections.

1 year after stopping

Your risk of cardiovascular disease, heart attack, and stroke has dropped to less than half that of someone who currently smokes.

5 years after stopping

Within a few years of stopping dipping or chewing, your risk of throat, esophageal and pancreatic cancers are greatly reduced.

Your risk of getting oral cancer is cut in half compared to someone who continued to use smokeless tobacco.

10–15 years after stopping

Your risk of having a stroke or heart attack and your risk of Alzheimer's disease has dropped to a similar rate as someone who never smoked. Your risk of tooth loss has decreased to a rate similar to someone who has never smoked.

Your risk of developing lung cancer is 30-50% less than that of someone who continued to smoke and your risk of dying from lung cancer is half that of someone who continued to smoke. Your risk of mouth, throat, and esophageal cancer has reduced significantly.

20 years after stopping

Risk of pancreatic cancer and risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, and voice box is now similar to that of someone who has never smoked.

For women, your added risk of cervical cancer caused by smoking has been cut in half.

MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY AFTER STOPPING USE

After you stop nicotine use, you may notice certain mental health symptoms in the short-term due to nicotine withdrawal. These can include mood swings, irritability, anxiety, and worsened mental health symptoms. However, in the longer-term, stopping nicotine use improves your mental health.

- Stopping smoking reduces stress over time and improves symptoms of anxiety and depression. You may notice that your mood improves a few weeks after becoming tobacco-free.
- If you have PTSD, you may find that your PTSD symptoms lessen after cessation.
- Struggling to get a good night's sleep? When you become nicotine-free, you will start to fall asleep faster, wake up less frequently at night, and sleep longer over time.
- If you take medications for depression and anxiety, stopping smoking will help your medications work more effectively. Your doctor may even be able to lower your medication dosage.
- Stopping vaping? Research suggests that you will experience improved mental health and better quality of life after cessation.

CHAPTER 4: MEDICATIONS FOR TOBACCO AND NICOTINE USE CESSATION

TYPES OF MEDICATIONS

There are many types of medications used to help people stop tobacco and nicotine use. Some of these medications provide nicotine to help you slowly reduce the nicotine level in your body when you stop using tobacco. Medications that provide nicotine are called nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). NRT reduces your cravings for nicotine and helps to manage and reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms. There are also two prescription medicines, bupropion and varenicline, which do not contain nicotine, but can help you have fewer nicotine cravings and reduce withdrawal symptoms.

All medications are effective in increasing your chances of stopping for good. The medications listed below are available through VA. Contact your health care provider if you are interested in using medications to help you stop.

1. **Bupropion** (Zyban®, Wellbutrin®)
2. **Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT):**
nicotine gum, lozenge, nasal spray, and patch
3. **Varenicline** (formerly Chantix®)

Some of these medications can be used together to help you stop tobacco and nicotine use. Many studies have shown that these combinations are effective and can work better than using one medication alone.



Learn More

Explore treatment guides to learn how properly use these medications



Scan for more information



Example combination therapy:

- Nicotine patch + nicotine gum
- Nicotine patch + nicotine lozenge
- Nicotine patch + nicotine nasal spray
- Bupropion + any NRT



Don't forget to add your medication plan within the Stay Quit Coach app!

You may be wondering “What works best?” when it comes to stopping. We know that **combination therapy or varenicline, together with behavioral counseling, gives you the best chance of becoming nicotine-free**. The choice of medication will be based on your medical history, which you can discuss with your medical provider.

CHAPTER 5: GETTING READY FOR QUIT DAY!

SET YOUR QUIT DAY

As your quit day approaches, there are several things you might want to do to get ready.

First, choose your quit date...this date is very important!

MY QUIT DAY:

PLANNING FOR QUIT DAY

Now get your home, car and workplace ready for quit day by following the tips below:

1. Plan out your tobacco and nicotine usage so you will run out by your quit day.
2. Make sure you remove all tobacco products from your home. Look in jacket pockets, kitchen drawers, the freezer, your garage, or other frequent storage sites. Also check inside your car for any product stashes. Considering that the average craving lasts 2-3 minutes, removing nearby products will keep you from being tempted. For most folks, the urge may pass before you can get in the car and go to a store to buy a pack of cigarettes, a can of pouches, or any other products.
3. Remove all ashtrays and lighters. These can be triggers for use once you stop using. Since your plan is to stop using, do you really still need them? Remove all of these items from the car as well.
4. Clean up the area where you typically smoke. For instance, if you smoke in one room (e.g., porch, garage) or in the car, clean up these locations as they can be triggers for you to smoke. Remove cigarette butts, wash down furniture, and spray upholstery with an odor neutralizer to help remove the smoke smell. Getting your car cleaned or detailed may help. If you vape, get rid of your vape and other reminders of it.

You may find you have trouble spending time in these areas for a while. That is ok, just take a break and come back when you have a few weeks of being tobacco-free.

5. Go to the store and stock up on some substitutes. Sugar-free gum, sugar-free mints or candies, carrot and celery sticks or other vegetables, toothpicks, straws, and cinnamon sticks. These items can be helpful when you are having a craving.

6. Think about hobbies or other interests you have to fill up your day. Some hobbies and interests to consider would be puzzles, games, reading, exercise, fishing, woodworking, painting, drawing, and cooking. Make sure it is a hobby not associated with tobacco and nicotine use.

When you are planning to stop using, it is first good to look at your routines and patterns of use. Pick three times you use nicotine and write these down.

Write an activity you can do or a substitute you could use instead of using nicotine or tobacco products.

For example, if you dip or chew after meals, brush your teeth instead. Other examples of activities and substitutes are:

- Using sugar-free mint, gum, or candy
- Talking to a friend
- Chewing on a straw or toothpick
- Reading a book
- Eating carrot sticks or celery sticks
- Working on a crossword puzzle
- Drinking water
- Playing computer games
- Going for a walk
- Brushing your teeth
- Doing chair exercises
- Deep breathing



Add your triggers and make a plan for managing them directly within the Stay Quit Coach app.

1. I usually use tobacco/nicotine when:

Instead, I can:

2. I usually use tobacco/nicotine when:

Instead, I can:

3. I usually use tobacco/nicotine when:

Instead, I can:

STRESS AND NICOTINE USE

Most Veterans who use tobacco and nicotine products say that stress is their biggest trigger. Depending on the product you use, you may notice that when you are under more stress, you tend to use more or inhale/puff more deeply. It is important to discover a way to handle stress without turning to nicotine. While you might feel more relaxed after use, nicotine is not a true relaxant. Nicotine is a stimulant, and it increases your heart rate and blood pressure very quickly after you use it. Because of this, the high level of nicotine from smoking, vaping, or other use may cause you more physical stress. The feeling of relaxation you may experience when you use tobacco and nicotine products is usually from the nicotine treating the withdrawal symptoms you experience between uses.

What situations cause you to experience stress? Write them down:

Here are some tips you can try to help you deal with stress without smoking, vaping, or using other products. Try several of these before your quit day to see what works for you.

Stress Reduction Tips:

- **Deep breathing:** Inhale deeply through your nose or mouth, hold the breath for four counts, and then slowly exhale the breath. Repeat this 4-5 times.
- **Go for a walk or a jog:** Walk or jog around the block, to the mailbox, or around your house. It does not matter how far you go, just get up and get moving!
- **Do chair exercises:** If you cannot walk, sit in your chair and get your arms moving. You can do this with just your hands or put a canned food (same weight) in each hand and do arm curls or arm lifts to the front and side.
- **Drink water:** Cold water can reduce a craving and also fill you up, so you don't fill up on other foods. It also helps remove toxic substances from your body faster.

- **Take a break:** If a situation is causing you stress, take a break and go outside or to another room. If you are driving, pull over at a rest stop or parking lot and take a break. Try some deep breathing to feel better without using tobacco.

Find additional resources and exercises to help you manage stress without nicotine.

prevention.va.gov/HealthyLiving/ManageStress.asp



Scan for more information

- **Listen to relaxing music:** Relaxing music can reduce your stress and improve your mood.

DEEP BREATHING FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

What is deep breathing? ¹

This involves using your diaphragm to help bring about a state of physiological relaxation. The diaphragm is a large muscle that rests across the bottom of your rib cage. When you inhale, the diaphragm drops, opening space so air can come in. When watching someone do this, it looks like their stomach is filling with air. This type of breathing helps activate the part of your nervous system that controls relaxation. It can lead to decreased heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension, and an overall feeling of relaxation. You can do this quickly and easily, almost anywhere.



Why be concerned with how I'm breathing?

- Breathing plays a role in your physical tension and body's response to stress.
- You can lower your level of stress-related arousal and tension.
- Taking calm, relaxing breaths will reduce arousal during stressful situations.

What is the best way to use deep breathing exercises?

- Use these exercises frequently. Take deep breaths at the first signs of stress, anxiety, or other symptoms.
- Schedule time for relaxation. **My scheduled time will be:**

¹ Hunter, C. L., Goodie, J. L., Oordt, M. S., & Dobbmeyer, A. C. (2009). Integrated behavioral health in primary care: Step-by-step guidance for assessment and intervention, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association. Adapted from the Center for Integrated Healthcare (a VA Office of Mental Health Services' Center of Excellence), Deep Breathing patient handout (Version 1.0), March 2010.

Instructions

- Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying down. It is sometimes easier to first learn deep breathing while lying on your back as it makes it easier to feel the correct stomach motion.
- Place one hand, palm side down, on your chest. Place the other hand, palm side down, on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose to a slow count of 3 or 4. Notice the motion of each hand. When you breathe in and out, the hand on your chest should move very little, and the hand on your stomach should push out significantly on your inhale and go back down on your exhale. Your abdomen should gently expand as if you are filling a balloon in your stomach each time you inhale.
- Exhale through your nose and continue to notice the motion of your hands. Alternately, you can exhale through your mouth while making a sighing sound.
- Start with just a few deep breaths and stop if you feel light-headed. With practice, you can increase the number of deep breaths without becoming light-headed.

CRAVINGS FOR TOBACCO AND NICOTINE: WHAT DO I DO?

Almost all people have cravings when they stop nicotine and tobacco use. You may even dream about smoking, vaping, or chewing tobacco. This is normal. Remember, if you have cravings this does not mean you will not be able to stop for good. So, what can you do about cravings?

Try the *DEADS Strategies*:

D-Delay

The most important thing to remember is that an urge will go away whether you use tobacco or not. Waiting out an urge, especially if you begin to do something else, is easier than you may expect. Believe it or not, the urge will fade after about 5-10 minutes, even if you don't smoke. It also helps if you have a positive attitude about the urge disappearing. Think "This won't last, the urge will go away" or "I would like a cigar, but I am not going to have one, because I don't need one."

E-Escape

Remove yourself from the situation or event that led to the urge. If you're in a room where others are smoking, vaping, or using, and an urge hits, get up and take a short walk. You can walk around the building or outside until you feel ready to re-enter the situation without using tobacco.

A-Avoid

Avoid situations where you'll be tempted to use tobacco. This will be particularly important in the first days and weeks after you stop. For example, if you regularly go places where there's a lot of tobacco use, it's best to avoid them for a little while to allow you to get used to not using tobacco.

D-Distract

Get busy and get back to what you were doing before the urge hit. There may be other things you enjoy doing that are incompatible with tobacco use. You can try working in the yard, reading a book or magazine, walking, taking a shower, working on a crossword puzzle, or doing a hobby.

S-Substitute

When you feel you want to use tobacco, substitute something else. Try sugar-free candy or sugar-free gum, especially if you are watching your weight. You could also eat a piece of fruit or drink a glass of water. Chew on something like a straw or a toothpick. The trick is to come up with something you like that can be easily substituted.

GET HELP FROM FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Choosing to stop is a tough decision. You must do it for yourself, but you don't have to do it alone. Asking for help is a key part of the cessation process. Think about who can help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help—you can:

- Tell everyone that you're stopping and your quit day
- Ask family, friends and roommates to not use tobacco around you
- Ask a friend or spouse to stop with you
- Make a list of people who can give you support (fill in **Table 2. My Support People**)
- Join an in-person counseling group or an online support group

Your support person can:

- Listen when you want to talk
- Call to see how you are doing
- Offer to help you with chores, errands, childcare, shopping and other things
- Talk about problems and how to solve them
- Cheer you on

Work with your support person:

- Let them know what will help you
- Tell them when you will be stopping and set up time to talk after quit day
- Plan fun activities that can distract you
- Teach them about the cessation process, especially if they have not used tobacco themselves
- If you are keeping this attempt a secret, let them know this

Table 2. My Support People

| Name | Phone Number | Email Address |
|------|--------------|---------------|
| | | |
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CHAPTER 6: QUIT DAY

WHAT TO DO ON QUIT DAY

It is finally here: Your quit day. This is the day you stop using tobacco for good. Take a moment and say: “I can stop vaping...” or “I can stop using tobacco and today is the day!”

Do you have a plan for today? The most important thing is to make your quit day a positive experience. Try not to schedule too many events for today. You want to stay busy, but not feel rushed or under stress. Keep your emergency kit handy. Drink plenty of water, try deep breathing for relaxation, go for a walk, or do other exercises.

DO

- Change your routine
- Switch the order of your morning
- Be active — take a walk
- Have your morning coffee in a new mug
- Drink less caffeine
- Drive to work on a new route
- Take your work break inside
- Get up from the table as soon as you finish eating
- Sit in a different chair to watch TV or read the newspaper
- Brush your teeth and use mouthwash right when you wake up to help prevent use.

KEEP BUSY

- Do something fun like see a movie
- Exercise for 20-30 minutes a day
- Wash your clothes and sheets
- Use substitutes to keep your mouth busy
- Meet with friends who don't use nicotine
- Go to places that don't allow tobacco, like the library
- Drink more water
- Stay away from places where you used tobacco or nicotine

DON'T

- Feel like tobacco has been taken away from you. You are better off without it!
- Test yourself by trying a cigarette, a vape, or a pouch. This can lead to a full return to use.
- Forget there will be difficult times as you stop: Be proud of how well you are doing!
- Drink alcohol and go to bars for a while; this can be too tempting, and you may have nicotine cravings.
- Forget to bring nicotine lozenges or gum when you go places or do activities where you used tobacco.
- Use cannabis, which may increase your nicotine cravings.

HANDLING NICOTINE CRAVINGS

This is the one nicotine withdrawal symptom that can stay with you forever. The cravings will seem more intense the first week and will slowly reduce in intensity and frequency. After the first month, **the cravings might only last a few seconds**. You can make the cravings go away by using a substitute like gum or sugar-free candy, starting an activity, doing deep breathing (page 21), or any of the other activities listed above. Remember to review the *DEADS Strategies* from [Chapter 5](#).

EXERCISE

Exercise can be helpful when you are stopping tobacco use. Our body produces a substance called endorphins that make you feel better. When you exercise, you produce more endorphins, which can help with cravings for tobacco. You may find exercise easier once you stop smoking or vaping. This is because you may be breathing better and the circulation of blood in your body has improved. Keep at it and you will find that exercising becomes easier each day. Here are some tips for you to get started:

- If you have not been exercising regularly, you can start with walking or using a stationary bike for 5 minutes a day. Increase by 2-3 minutes a week until you can go for 30 minutes a day. The 30-minute session can be split into two 15-minute sessions if you are unable to exercise for longer than 15 minutes.
- If you are using any type of cardiovascular equipment, start at a low to moderate resistance setting or pace. You are exercising at the right intensity if you are lightly panting but can still hold a conversation while doing the exercise. If you cannot hold a conversation when exercising, then turn down the resistance or slow your pace. Over time, you can work up to higher settings.
- If your activity is limited and you are unable to walk, try doing chair exercises. This consists of using light weights and doing arm exercises in a chair. An alternative to the weights is to use cans of food (just make sure that the weight is similar). Any type of body movement is good, so work within your limitations.
- If your doctor limits your exercise due to health reasons such as heart problems, please talk with them before you start exercising.

What exercise or activities will you make time for in the upcoming days and weeks?

HEALTHY EATING

Try adding healthy food choices to your meals and snacks by:

- Eating more fruits and vegetables. If you cannot afford fresh fruit or vegetables, then try buying them frozen.
- Drinking more water, which will help you feel fuller and help reduce weight gain
- Eating carrot sticks and celery sticks to help with the hand-to-mouth habit from smoking
- Eating crunchy foods like pretzels, rice cakes, or air popped popcorn, so your mouth has to work
- Eating a small square of dark chocolate or low-fat frozen yogurt if craving a sweet
- Eating smaller meals, but more often. If you eat snacks in between meals, you are less likely to overeat. This can help prevent weight gain as well.

CHAPTER 7: THE FIRST TWO WEEKS AFTER QUIT DAY

BENEFITS OF STOPPING

Congratulations on becoming tobacco-free! This is a very challenging task, but you will be rewarded in many ways. In the first few weeks you may notice:

- Improved breathing
- More energy
- Improved sense of taste and smell
- The yellow staining almost gone from your fingers and sides of your mouth
- Feeling like you are in control instead of nicotine being in control of you
- More money!

List some improvements you have noticed since your quit day:

List some benefits you are looking forward to in the next few weeks:

REWARD YOURSELF

By stopping tobacco use, you are doing a great thing for your body. This can be challenging, and you may feel that it is hard to keep your resolve. Try making a list of rewards and see if this helps keep you motivated during this challenging time.

Rewards could be:

- Buying yourself something special to celebrate stopping
- Splurging on a massage or dinner at a new restaurant
- Seeing a movie or sporting event
- Starting a new hobby
- Beginning exercising
- Using your savings to pay off your bills
- Going on a nice trip after being tobacco-free for six months

To start saving money for your rewards you can put the money you spend each week on tobacco into a piggy bank or savings account. This way you can see the savings accumulate and this can be a reward on its own. You will be amazed at how fast the money you used to spend on tobacco adds up and how soon you will be able to buy your rewards.

Calculate how much money you will save from stopping tobacco and nicotine product use:

- I spend \$ _____ per week on tobacco
- \$ _____ per week on tobacco x 52 weeks =
- \$ _____ per year



Use the Stay Quit Coach app to track how much you save over time.

My Rewards

After **1 week** without tobacco, I will reward myself with:

After **2 weeks** without tobacco, I will reward myself with:

After **1 month** without tobacco, I will reward myself with:

After **3 months** without tobacco, I will reward myself with:

After **6 months** without tobacco, I will reward myself with:

After **12 months** without tobacco, I will reward myself with:

TOBACCO AND NICOTINE USE TREATMENT RESOURCES



mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/

veterans.smokefree.gov/



Quit VET, VA Tobacco Quitline
1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838)

9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through Friday (EST)

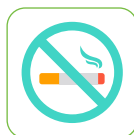
Get additional support to become tobacco- and nicotine-free from a Quit VET coach

mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/quit-vet.asp



SmokefreeVET Text Message Program

Text the word VET to 47848 or sign up online to receive tips and support for stopping smoking and smokeless tobacco: smokefree.gov/VET

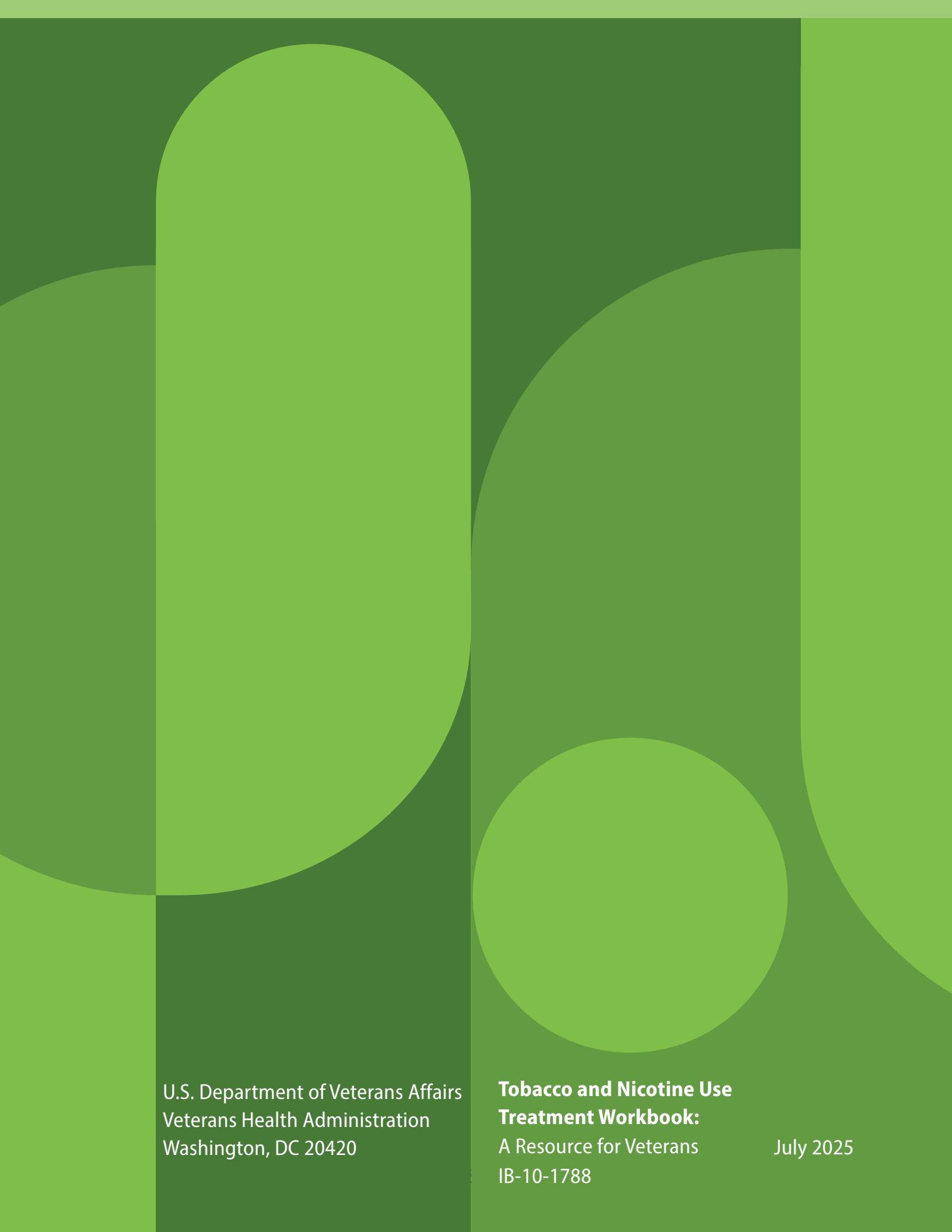


Stay Quit Coach smartphone app

mobile.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach



If you are in crisis, contact the Veterans Crisis Line for support. Dial 988 and press 1 to talk to someone now or text 838255.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

**Tobacco and Nicotine Use
Treatment Workbook:**

A Resource for Veterans
IB-10-1788

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