

# RESISTING TOBACCO CRAVINGS

Everybody's quitting experience is different. You can survive the withdrawal symptoms of nicotine (like you can survive a cold or the flu). After about 10 days, things should get easier, but in the meantime here are some tips to help you resist the urge to smoke or use tobacco when a craving hits.

- **Delay.** Urges generally last for about 3 to 10 minutes. During that time, move your thoughts toward something else. Make a phone call, go for a walk, and drink some water.
- **Get active!** Physical activity can help distract you from tobacco cravings as well as reduce the intensity of cravings. So next time you are experiencing a craving go for a walk, stretch your muscles, do some exercises, go swimming, touch your toes, do some chair exercises, or go for a bike ride.
- **Keep your hands busy.** If you scored high for 'handling' on the "Why I Smoke" test this means that you like to handle a cigarette. If you are experiencing a craving do something to keep your hands busy. Do a puzzle; doodle; play solitaire; knit; crochet; sew; or play with a stress ball, play dough or silly putty.
- **Remember the benefits of quitting.** Write down all the reasons you want to quit on an index card. Read it every day and/or when you are experiencing a craving to help you to resist the urge to use tobacco.
- **Give your mouth something to do.** Sip water through a straw, chew gum, suck on hard candy or munch on healthy snacks. Brush your teeth.
- **Don't have 'just one'.** While it may be tempting to have just one cigarette to satisfy a craving, don't fool yourself into thinking that you will be able to stop at one. Having 'just one' oftentimes leads to having another, then another – and before you know it you are using tobacco again.
- **Avoid triggers.** Cravings are often the strongest in situations where you have smoked or chewed tobacco most often. Identify your triggers and make a plan for how to avoid or handle those situations. If you need help check out the "Hot Tip" sheet in this folder for suggestions.
- **Practice relaxation techniques.** In the past, smoking or using tobacco may have been your way of dealing with stress. If you are feeling stressed by work, school, or trying to resist a tobacco craving take the edge off by practicing a relaxation technique. These can include deep breathing exercises (see handout in folder for tips), muscle relaxation, yoga, visualization, hypnosis or massage.
- **Get support.** Call or text a family member, friend or support group member for moral support as you try to resist a tobacco craving.
- **Go online.** Consider joining an online tobacco cessation program. You will be able to learn from others how they have handled their cravings. They may also be able to provide you with some support during times when your friends and family may be unavailable.
- **Try NRTs.** Try a nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) instead of using tobacco. Some of the over the counter therapies include patches, gum and lozenges. Nicotine nasal spray and the nicotine inhaler are available by prescription as well as the stop smoking medication bupropion (Zyban) and varenicline (Chantix). Talk with your health care provider about which nicotine replacement therapy or stop smoking medication might work best for you.

MayoClinic.com. (2011). *Quitting smoking: 10 ways to resist tobacco cravings*. Retrieved July 5, 2011, from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/nicotine-craving/SK00057>.