

Coping With Stress Without Smoking

Stress is a normal part of life—in moderation it can help you reach your goals, but too much stress creates more problems. Managing stress is a key part of quitting smoking.

You may have learned to deal with stress by smoking. But there are ways to handle stress without smoking. Here are a few ideas you might find helpful. Some of these tips may take practice, but others you can do right away. Try one or more to learn what works for you.



Relax: Our bodies respond to stress by releasing hormones that increase your heart rate and raise your blood pressure. Practicing relaxation techniques, like the ones below, may improve your health and help you handle your stress in positive ways.

Breathe: Take a few slow, deep breaths—in through your nose, out through your mouth. You will feel your body start to relax.

Locate Your Stress: Take a minute to figure out how stress affects your body. Where do you feel tension in your body? Finding ways to reduce that tension will also help your mental stress. A warm bath, a massage, or stretching can help you release built-up tension.

Exercise: Being active sends out natural chemicals that help your mood and reduce your stress. Sometimes a short walk is all it takes to relieve stress. And walking is free!

Talk: You don't have to deal with stress alone. Share your feelings with friends, family, and other important people in your life who are able to support you in staying smokefree.

Focus: Life can sometimes be overwhelming. Try not to get caught up in worrying about what's next. Instead, try to focus on what is happening now, not what you might have to deal with in the future.

Care: Make an extra effort to take care of yourself. This includes basic things like eating a balanced diet, drinking lots of water, and getting enough sleep.

Decaffeinate: Caffeine can help you stay awake, but it also can make you feel tense, jittery, and stressed. Cutting back or even doing away with caffeine can help reduce your feelings of stress. Switching to herbal tea or even hot water with lemon gives you a chance to enjoy a hot beverage but without the caffeine.

Accept: Life is full of twists and turns. You'll always have some stress in your life. It helps to understand that there will be good days and bad days.

Health Experts Warn Smokers and Vapers at Greater Risk

The coronavirus attacks the lungs, and behaviors that harm the lungs put individuals at greater risk. The harmful impact of smoking on the lungs is well documented, and there is growing evidence that vaping (use of e-cigarettes) can harm lung health as well:

There is conclusive evidence that smoking increases susceptibility for respiratory infections, weakens the immune system and is a major cause of underlying health conditions that increase risk for COVID-19, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), other lung diseases, heart disease and diabetes.

There is also growing evidence that vaping can also harm lung health. Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, has stated that "emerging evidence suggests that exposure to aerosols from e-cigarettes harms the cells of the lung and diminishes the ability to respond to infection."

For these reasons, there is mounting concern among leading public health organizations and medical experts that people who smoke or vape are at greater risk for serious complications from COVID-19. Adding to these concerns is the fact that youth e-cigarette use remains at epidemic levels in the U.S. 3.6 million U.S. kids use e-cigarettes, including 1 in five high school students (19.6%).

Coping With Stress Without Smoking. Retrieved from <https://smokefree.gov/challenges-when-quitting/stress/coping-with-stress>



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see what is going on this week

COVID-19: Quit Smoking and Vaping to Protect Your Lungs. Retrieved from <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/covid-19>

A Personal Message From Your Health Promotion Team



What are the effects of mixing alcohol and tobacco?

Mixing alcohol and tobacco can have long-ranging and serious health consequences.

The short-term effects of mixing alcohol and tobacco are subtle. If you have ever visited a bar, you know that it is a common practice to drink and smoke at the same time. The primary danger from drinking and smoking simultaneously is that, because one drug is a depressant and the other one is a stimulant, you may not realize how much the alcohol is affecting your body. This could cause you to drink more than you should because you do not feel drunk. Incorrectly assessing your level of inebriation could lead to poor judgment.

The long-term effects of mixing alcohol and tobacco are still being studied, but initial tests show that mixing the two drugs can have long-ranging and serious health consequences. Studies have shown that smoking and drinking together can increase the risk of throat and esophageal cancer. This may be because the alcohol dissolves chemicals in the cigarette while they are still in the throat. This can cause carcinogens to become trapped against the sensitive tissues of the throat. Furthermore, drinking alcohol and smoking at the same time affects how quickly the body can metabolize both drugs. This means that the carcinogens from cigarettes stay in the bloodstream for longer. Longer exposure to carcinogens means an increased cancer risk.

If you are addicted to tobacco and alcohol, help is available. The effects of mixing tobacco and alcohol should not be taken lightly.

The Effects of Mixing Alcohol and Tobacco. Retrieved from <https://www.alcohol.org/mixing-with/tobacco/>

Got questions on other health issues related to sleep health, physical activity, tobacco, or nutrition? Share them with us and we will help you “Bust The Myths!” Send your questions to usaf.jbsa.afmsa.mbx.hpo@mail.mil. Make sure to include in the subject line “Health Myth Buster.” For more online health tips visit the Air Force Health Promotion webpage <https://www.airforcemedicine.af.mil/Resources/Health-Promotion/>



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HERE'S WHAT'S GOING ON WHERE YOU LIVE

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