



Cravings

ARIZONA SMOKERS' HELPLINE 1-800-556-6222 - WWW.ASHLINE.ORG

What to Expect

▼ Your cravings will be strongest in the first week. Generally you will have individual "cravings" that last 30-90 seconds.

▼ You may also experience "rapid fire" cravings where they follow each other in rapid succession. As the days pass, the cravings will get farther and farther apart.

Frequency

▼ Most cravings begin 6-12 hours after you stop, peak (stay high) for 1-3 days, and may last 3-4 weeks.

▼ There is some evidence that mild occasional cravings may last for 6 months.

Self Management

▼ Remind yourself that cravings are situational—they will pass.

▼ Keep oral substitutes handy: carrots, pickles, sunflower seeds, apples, celery, raisins, sugarless gum all work to stop the psychological need.

▼ Try this exercise: Take a deep breath through your nose and blow out slowly through your mouth, repeat 10 times. Hold the last breath while lighting a match, blow out slowly and blow out the match then crush it in an ashtray.

▼ Light incense or a candle instead of a cigarette.

▼ Avoid situations/activities that you normally associate with smoking (e.g. drinking alcohol.)

Nicotine and Your Body and Mind

▼ As a smoker, you have an ideal nicotine dose level and you regulate that level by how much you smoke, how deeply you breathe, and by the kind of tobacco you use. When you quit, physiological cravings result from the body wanting more nicotine.

▼ When you are exposed to smoking triggers or even when you use a small amount of nicotine, your mood changes and cravings can go up as well as your heart rate and blood pressure. Cravings are NOT "just in your head."

Related Notes

▼ The nicotine patch has been found to reduce cravings successfully. You may also want to try nicotine gum.

References available upon request.