



Tobacco Talk

Lewis County

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Version 1.1



Why People Start Smoking – The Three Link Chain of Addiction

Understanding why people start using tobacco is key to breaking the cycle of addiction. The reasons often fall into three categories: **mental**, **physical**, and **social**. Together, these form a chain that can be hard to break.

1. Psychological: Smoking as a Coping Mechanism

- **Stress and Anxiety:** Nicotine provides temporary relief by stimulating dopamine, but it increases stress over time, creating a cycle of dependency.
- **Peer Pressure:** The desire to fit in can lead to experimenting with tobacco, often overshadowing the risks.
- **Boredom:** Some use tobacco out of boredom, not realizing how quickly it can become a habit.

Activity:

Reflection on Mental Triggers

Have students identify situations that trigger stress or anxiety and write down healthy alternatives to cope with these feelings without using tobacco.

2. Physical: The Chemical Hook of Nicotine

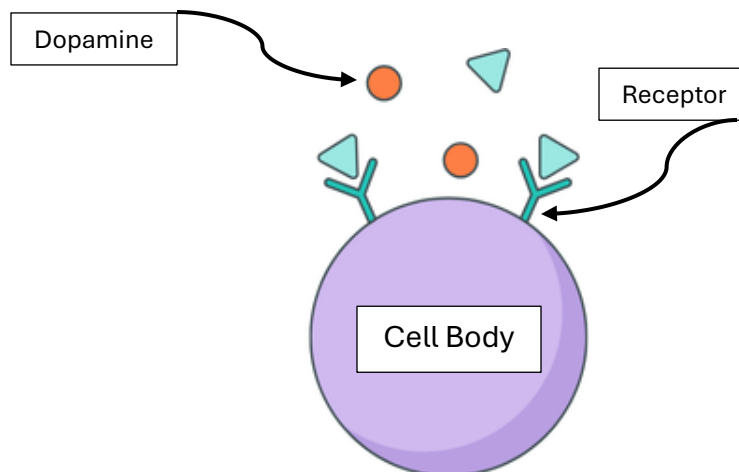
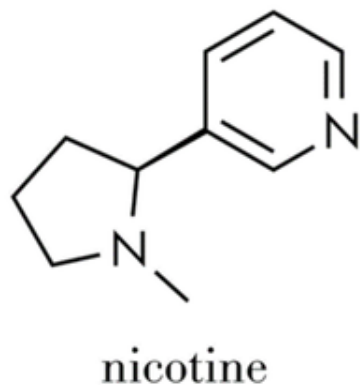
- **Brain Chemistry:** Nicotine alters brain chemistry by stimulating dopamine release, leading to cravings and withdrawal symptoms.
- **Dependence:** Over time, the brain requires more nicotine to achieve the same effect, making quitting difficult.

3. Social: The Influence of Environment

- **Family Influence:** Tobacco use within the family can normalize the behavior, increasing the likelihood of starting.
- **Media and Advertising:** Marketing often portrays tobacco as cool or rebellious, heavily influencing young people.
- **Social Norms:** Smoking or vaping is sometimes seen as a way to bond, leading individuals to start out of fear of being left out.
- **Location:** Tobacco industries target low-income areas to market heavily towards as well as using strategies such as their targeting of Black Americans with menthol flavors



What is Nicotine?



Nicotine is a naturally occurring chemical found in the tobacco plant; it also can be made synthetically. It's the substance that makes smoking and using tobacco products addictive. When you smoke, chew, vape or use tobacco products, nicotine is quickly absorbed into your bloodstream and reaches your brain in just a few seconds.

How Nicotine Works:

- Nicotine Molecule:** The nicotine molecule is small but powerful. Once in your body, it binds to specific receptors in your body known as nicotinic acetylcholine receptors. Nicotine fits on a receptor and pretends to be acetylcholine.
- Receptors in the Brain:** These receptors are part of a complex system that normally responds to the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, which plays a role in muscle movement, heart function, and cognitive processes like learning and memory.
- The Effects of Nicotine:** When nicotine binds to these receptors, it triggers a series of chemical reactions that release dopamine, a "feel-good" neurotransmitter. This release gives you a temporary feeling of pleasure or relaxation, which is why nicotine is so addictive. However, this effect is short-lived, leading to the craving for another cigarette or hit from a vape.

Why Is Nicotine Addictive?

Because nicotine interacts directly with the brain's **reward system**, it can quickly lead to **addiction**. Your brain starts to rely on the nicotine to release dopamine, making it harder to feel good without it. This is why quitting tobacco products can be so challenging—the brain has become dependent on nicotine to function normally.



The Bigger Picture:

While **nicotine** is the **addictive** part of tobacco, **it's not the only harmful substance!** Tobacco products contain *thousands* of chemicals, many of which are toxic and can cause serious health problems. Understanding how nicotine works is the first step in recognizing the dangers of tobacco use and why it's important to stay tobacco-free.

Physical Response: The Immediate Effects of Nicotine

Nicotine doesn't just affect your brain—it impacts your entire body. Here's what happens within moments of taking in nicotine:

- **Increased Heart Rate:** Nicotine causes your heart to beat faster. This can lead to a higher risk of heart problems over time, especially with regular use.
- **Elevated Blood Pressure:** As nicotine stimulates your adrenal glands, it results in the release of adrenaline. This “fight or flight” hormone causes your blood vessels to constrict, raising your blood pressure.
- **Adrenaline Release:** The surge of adrenaline from nicotine doesn't just affect your heart and blood pressure. It also heightens your alertness, giving you a temporary energy boost. However, this effect can make your body feel tense and stressed and irritable.

Cravings: The Struggle with Nicotine Withdrawal

When you use nicotine regularly, your body and brain start to expect it. If you try to stop or go too long without it, withdrawal symptoms can kick in. This is because your brain has become accustomed to the high levels of dopamine that nicotine provides.

Common Withdrawal Symptoms Include:

- **Intense Cravings:** Your brain urges you to use nicotine again to restore its dopamine levels.
- **Irritability:** Without nicotine, you might feel easily annoyed or frustrated as your body adjusts.
- **Anxiety:** Nicotine withdrawal can lead to feelings of anxiety or restlessness, making it hard to concentrate or relax.
- **Difficulty Concentrating:** Without the regular dopamine boosts from nicotine, focusing on tasks can become challenging.



The Cost of Using Tobacco: What's It Really Worth?

How Much Money Will You Spend?

Activity: Calculate the Cost

Let's say you smoke one pack of cigarettes a day. The average cost of a pack is around \$7.00. Here's how much you'll spend over different periods:

- **One week:**
7 days x \$7.00 per pack = \$ _____
- **One month (30 days):**
30 days x \$7.00 per pack = \$ _____
- **One year (365 days):**
365 days x \$7.00 per pack = \$ _____
- **Ten years:**
3650 days x \$7.00 per pack = \$ _____

Reflection: Think about what else you could buy with that money instead. Write down a few ideas: *remember this does not include the medical costs to treat illnesses from smoking such as pneumonia, lung cancer, and COPD!*

- **\$50:** _____
- **\$2,500:** _____
- **\$25,550:** _____

How Many Years of Life Are Lost?

Smoking doesn't just cost money—it also costs *time*. On average, smoking can reduce your life expectancy by about 10 years.

Activity: Personal Reflection

Imagine yourself 10 years older. What would you like to be doing then? Write down a goal or dream you have for your future:

- **In 10 years, I hope to:** _____



Now, imagine missing out on that because of an addiction to nicotine. How does that make you feel?

Personal Costs: What Else Is at Stake?

Beyond the money and years of life, smoking can affect other parts of your life:

- **Relationships:** Smoking can strain relationships with family and friends who are concerned about your health or do not want to be around tobacco for their own health.
- **Opportunities:** Smoking can limit your participation in certain activities, such as sports or physical challenges, and can lead to higher life/health insurance premiums, making it more expensive to take care of your health.
- **Health Costs:** Long-term smoking can lead to chronic illnesses, which can be expensive to treat and can limit your ability to enjoy life.

Activity: Consider the Impact

Think about how smoking could affect these areas of your life. Choose one area (relationships, opportunities, or health) and write a few sentences about how smoking might change things for you.

Area Chosen: _____

Impact:



The Impact of Tobacco on the Environment: It's More Than Just Smoke

Tobacco use doesn't just affect your health—it also has serious consequences for our planet. From the production process to the waste it creates tobacco's impact on the environment is something we all need to consider.

Littering and Pollution: Cigarette Butts and More

Cigarette butts are the most common form of litter worldwide. These tiny filters might seem harmless, but they are made of plastic fibers that do not break down easily. There are billions of them made every year!

Did You Know?

- It takes up to 10 years for a single cigarette butt to fully decompose. During this time, it can release toxic chemicals into the environment, contaminating soil, water and wildlife.
- Packaging from tobacco products, like cigarette packs and plastic wrappers, adds to the growing problem of waste pollution and production.

Activity: Track Your Impact

Imagine if everyone in your class smoked and each person littered 2 cigarette butts per day. Let's calculate how many cigarette butts would be littered by the end of the school year (180 days).

Number of students in class: _____

Total cigarette butts after 10 years:

Cigarette butts per day: _____

(# in one year) x (10 years) = _____

Total cigarette butts in one school year:

(2 cigarette butts) x (Number of students) x

(180 days) = _____

Impact of Disposable E-Cigarettes on the Environment: Disposable e-cigarettes contribute to environmental pollution in several ways. They are made of plastic, metal, and lithium-ion batteries, which are not biodegradable and can leach harmful chemicals into the soil and water when improperly disposed of. The single-use nature of these devices means they are often discarded after a short period of use, adding to the growing problem of electronic waste. Additionally, the production and disposal of these e-cigarettes require significant energy and resources, further contributing to their environmental footprint.



Toxic Chemicals Found in Tobacco Products

Chemical	Cigarettes	Cigars	Smokeless Tobacco	E-Cigarettes
Nicotine	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tar	Yes	Yes	No	No
Carbon Monoxide	Yes	Yes	No	No
Formaldehyde	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ammonia	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Arsenic	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Benzene	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Hydrogen Cyanide	Yes	Yes	No	No
Lead	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Cadmium	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acetaldehyde	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Toluene	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Polonium-210	Yes	Yes	No	No
Nitrosamines	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Acrolein	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Diacytyl	No	No	No	Yes

- **Nicotine:** The addictive substance found in all tobacco products. It is what makes quitting tobacco so difficult.
- **Tar:** A sticky, black substance that forms when tobacco burns, coating the lungs and contributing to cancer risk.
- **Carbon Monoxide:** A colorless, odorless gas that can interfere with the body's ability to carry oxygen, leading to heart and lung diseases.
- **Formaldehyde:** A chemical used in embalming fluids, it is also present in tobacco smoke and some e-cigarette liquids, contributing to respiratory problems and cancer.
- **Ammonia:** Often added to tobacco to enhance nicotine absorption, increasing its addictive potential.



- **Arsenic:** A poisonous element that is used in some pesticides and can be found in tobacco products, leading to an increased risk of cancer.
- **Benzene:** A known carcinogen found in tobacco smoke and some e-cigarette aerosols.
- **Hydrogen Cyanide:** Used in chemical weapons, this toxic gas is also present in tobacco smoke.
- **Lead:** A heavy metal that is toxic to almost all organs in the body, contributing to a range of health problems, including developmental issues in children.
- **Cadmium:** A toxic metal used in batteries, cadmium is also present in tobacco products, increasing the risk of lung and kidney damage.
- **Acetaldehyde:** A chemical that can increase the addictive potential of nicotine and is present in all forms of tobacco products.
- **Toluene:** A solvent that is toxic to the brain, toluene is found in tobacco smoke and can contribute to neurological damage.
- **Polonium-210:** A radioactive decay product formed from radium that can contribute to lung cancer risk, particularly found in cigarette smoke.
- **Nitrosamines:** Potent carcinogens found in tobacco and tobacco smoke, as well as in smokeless tobacco and e-cigarette liquids.
- **Acrolein:** A highly irritating chemical that can cause lung damage, found in cigarette smoke and e-cigarette vapor.
- **Diacetyl:** Linked to severe lung disease, this chemical is found in some e-cigarette flavors.



Vaping and E-Cigarettes: Unpacking the Myths and Facts

Myths vs. Facts

Many misconceptions surround vaping. Let's clear up some of the most common myths:

- **The Myth:** Vaping is just harmless water vapor.
 - **The Fact:** The vapor from e-cigarettes contains harmful chemicals, including nicotine, formaldehyde, and acrolein. These chemicals can cause lung damage and other health problems.
- **The Myth:** Vaping helps people quit smoking.
 - **The Fact:** While some believe that vaping can help with quitting smoking, many users end up continuing to vape or even using both products. There is also a risk of becoming addicted to nicotine through vaping, leading to smoking later on.
- **The Myth:** Vaping isn't addictive.
 - **The Fact:** Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive. Even e-liquids marketed as "nicotine-free" may contain trace amounts of nicotine.

Health Risks Associated with Vaping

The health risks of vaping are significant and can affect you now and in the future:

- **Lung Damage:** Vaping has been linked to serious lung injuries, including a condition known as EVALI (e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury). This can lead to hospitalization and even death.
- **Nicotine Addiction:** Nicotine in e-cigarettes can cause addiction, impacting brain development in young people. It can also lead to mood swings, anxiety, and other mental health issues.
- **Exposure to Toxic Chemicals:** Vaping exposes users to various toxic substances, such as formaldehyde and diacetyl, which can cause lung disease and other serious health problems.

Why Are Vapes So Appealing?

Vaping companies use clever marketing tactics to appeal to people:

- **Flavorings:** Vapes come in a variety of flavors, from fruity to candy-like, which can be especially enticing to teens. Many states are banning flavors due to how effective they are at getting people addicted to nicotine.



- **Sleek Design:** Many e-cigarettes are designed to be discreet, resembling USB drives or pens, making them easy to hide. Many have screens with flashy animations and messages to increase dopamine response.
- **False Marketing Promises:** Companies used false promises of being non-addictive, better for your health and other misinformation to get users to try their new product.



Breaking Free from Nicotine: A Step-by-Step Guide to Quitting Tobacco

Quitting nicotine is a powerful step toward taking control of your health and your future. Whether you smoke, vape, or chew tobacco, this guide will help you understand the process and give you the tools to succeed.

Step 1. Know Your Why: Personal Motivation

The first step in quitting is understanding your reasons for doing so. Everyone has their own motivation, and it's important to connect with yours.

- **Health:** Quitting improves your health in countless ways, from reducing the risk of cancer to improving your energy levels.
- **Freedom:** Breaking free from nicotine means no longer being controlled by cravings or spending money on tobacco products.
- **Future:** Whether it's to live a longer, healthier life, or to be a positive role model for others, your future is brighter without nicotine.

Activity: Write Down Your Reasons Take a moment to write down why you want to quit nicotine. Keep this list somewhere visible, like on your phone or in your notebook, so you can refer to it when you need motivation.

Step 2. Prepare for Your Journey: Planning Ahead

Quitting is a *journey* that requires preparation. Setting up a plan increases your chances of **success!**

- **Set a Quit Date:** Choose a specific date to quit all forms of nicotine. This gives you time to prepare mentally and physically.
- **Tell Your Support Network:** Let friends, family, and even teachers know about your plan. Their support can provide encouragement and accountability.
- **Get Rid of Triggers:** Remove tobacco products, lighters, ashtrays, or vape devices from your environment. Reducing your exposure to these triggers helps prevent relapse.

At Home Activity: Create a Quit Plan

Map out your quit plan using the activities in each section below. Include your quit date, who you'll reach out to for support, and strategies for avoiding triggers. This plan will serve as your roadmap to success.



Step 3. Understand and Manage Withdrawal: What to Expect

Nicotine withdrawal can be challenging, but knowing what to expect can help you manage it effectively.

- **Common Symptoms:** Cravings, irritability, anxiety, trouble sleeping, and difficulty concentrating.
- **Duration:** Withdrawal symptoms typically peak within the first few days and gradually decrease over a few weeks.
- **Coping Strategies:** Use deep breathing, exercise, staying busy, and reminding yourself why you're quitting. Each craving you overcome proves that you have power over nicotine!

At Home Activity: Develop Coping Strategies

Write down a list of activities or techniques that will help you manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Try to link each trigger to a specific activity such as “walking outside after a meal to distance yourself from the tobacco” Other examples include taking deep breaths, drinking water, or talking to a friend. Try to take notice of what sparks a craving and either Avoid, Adjust or find Alternatives.

*Remember that most cravings are gone in a matter of seconds or minutes.
Distracting yourself can lessen the intensity of a craving.*

Step 4. Explore Support Options: You Don't Have to Do It Alone

There are many resources available to help you quit nicotine, no matter the form.

- **Quitlines and Online Resources:** Services like **1-800-QUIT-NOW** offer free, confidential support from trained counselors.
- **My Life, My Quit** number: **1-855-891-9989**. They will then be connected to a “quit coach” who will provide, free, confidential, real-time support. Each teen can get five sessions of personalized support through live **texting**, **phone**, or online **chat**.
- **Apps and Tools:** Download quit-smoking or quit-vaping apps that track your progress, send motivational messages, and offer tips.
- **School and Community Support:** Talk to your school counselor, join a support group, or participate in local programs designed to help young people quit tobacco.

Activity: Find Your Support Network Research and list out at least three resources or people you can turn to for support. This could include a Quitline, an app, a trusted adult, or a friend who's also quitting. Having a quit buddy **WILL** help you!



Step 5. Adopt Healthy Habits: Replacing Tobacco with Positive Actions

Quitting nicotine is an opportunity to replace a harmful habit with healthy ones. This not only helps you stay tobacco-free but also improves your overall well-being. Don't over do it! You are already in a stressful situation. Start with small positive changes and build from there. Keep in mind how good it feels to accomplish those goals!

- **Exercise Regularly:** Physical activity helps reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms while boosting your mood and energy.
- **Eat Well:** Choose nutritious foods that support your body's healing process. Healthy snacks can also help with the oral fixation that comes with quitting.
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Techniques like meditation or deep breathing can reduce stress and help you stay focused on your goals.

Activity: Create a New Routine Design a daily routine that includes healthy activities like exercise, healthy eating, and relaxation techniques. Structure your day to minimize idle time when cravings might strike.

Step 6. Celebrate Milestones: Recognize Your Progress

Quitting nicotine is a **BIG** deal, and every step forward is worth celebrating!

- **Set Milestones:** Celebrate 24 hours, 1 week, 1 month, and so on without nicotine. Reward yourself in small, meaningful ways—like treating yourself to something you enjoy like your favorite ice cream or taking time to relax .
- **Reflect on Your Progress:** Regularly check in with yourself about how far you've come. Reflecting on your success helps reinforce your commitment to staying tobacco-free and builds confidence!

Activity: Plan Your Rewards List out small rewards you'll give yourself at each milestone. These could be things like a movie night, a new book, or a special outing. These rewards will help keep you motivated. Use the money from not buying nicotine products to budget for fun rewards!

Step 7. Stay Strong: Overcoming Challenges and Preventing Relapse

The journey doesn't end once you quit; staying tobacco-free is an ongoing effort.

- **Be Prepared for Slips:** If you slip up, don't be discouraged. Identify what triggered the slip, learn from it, and get back on track. You did not lose all your progress!
- **Stay Connected:** Keep in touch with your support network. They can offer encouragement when you're struggling.



- **Visualize Your Tobacco-Free Future:** Regularly remind yourself of your goals and the reasons you quit. Staying focused on the future helps you resist the urge to return to nicotine.

Activity: Create a Vision Board Make a vision board or collage that represents your tobacco-free life. Include images, quotes, or goals that inspire you to stay nicotine-free. Keep it somewhere you'll see it every day. Alternatively use the space below to draw a picture of your nicotine free life.





My Quit Plan: Your Path to a Nicotine-Free Life

Use this worksheet to create a personalized plan to quit tobacco and nicotine. Fill out each section to help you stay focused and committed to your goal.

Know Your Why: Personal Motivation

Why do I want to quit? (List your top reasons for quitting nicotine. Keep this list somewhere you can easily see it when you need motivation.)

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

Set Your Quit Date

My Quit Date: (Pick a specific date to quit all forms of nicotine. This is your commitment to becoming nicotine-free.)

- **Date:** _____

Who will I tell? (List the people you will inform about your quit date so they can support you.)

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

Identify Your Triggers

What triggers my nicotine use? (Identify the situations, people, or feelings that make you want to use nicotine. Write them down so you can be prepared.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How will I avoid or cope with these triggers?

(For each trigger, list an alternative action or strategy you will use to avoid or handle the situation without nicotine.)

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

Coping with Cravings and Withdrawal

What will I do when cravings hit? (List activities or strategies you will use to manage cravings and withdrawal symptoms.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Healthy snacks or alternatives I'll keep on hand: (Write down some healthy snacks or items, like sugar-free gum, that you can use instead of nicotine.)



1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

Build Your Support Network

Who can I turn to for support? (List at least three resources or people you can rely on for support during your quit journey.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Apps, quitlines, or tools I will use: (Research and list any apps, quitlines, or other tools that will help you stay on track.)

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

Create a New Routine

What new habits will I start?

(Write down some healthy activities you'll incorporate into your daily routine to replace tobacco use.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How will I reward myself for staying nicotine-free?

(List small rewards you'll give yourself at milestones like 1 day, 1 week, and 1 month without nicotine.)

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

Plan for the Future

What will I do if I slip up?

(If you slip and use nicotine, don't be discouraged. Write down your plan for getting back on track.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My Vision for a Nicotine-Free Life:

(Imagine your future without nicotine. Describe how you'll feel, what you'll be able to do, and how your life will improve.)

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-



QUESTIONS ABOUT TOBACCO

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____



Survey

Student Feedback Survey

Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Your feedback is important and will help us improve future sessions.

1. Did you learn something new today?

- Yes No

2. Which topic was most interesting to you?

(Check one)

- Why People Start Using Nicotine
 How Nicotine Affects the Body
 The Cost of Using Tobacco
 The Impact of Tobacco on the Environment
 Vaping and E-Cigarettes
 How to Quit Nicotine

3. Do you feel more informed about the risks of nicotine use? (Check one)

- Yes No

4. Do you plan to make any changes to your tobacco or nicotine use after this session?

- Yes, I plan to quit.
 Yes, I plan to reduce my use.
 No, I don't use nicotine products.
 No, I don't plan to make changes.

5. What was the most valuable thing you learned today?

6. How likely are you to recommend this session to a friend? (Check one)

- Very Likely
 Likely
 Not Sure
 Unlikely

7. Any suggestions for improving this session? (Write in below)