



**Consumers Helping
Others Improve
Their Condition by
Ending Smoking**

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Does Smoking Seem Cool Again?

By Deidre Stenard

For years, cigarette smoking in celebrity culture has been more distasteful than glamorous. Smoking is now popular among young celebrities in magazines, music videos, and movies. Cigarettes are an unexpected statement with celebrities such as Hailey Bieber, Charli



XCX, Kylie Jenner, Timothée Chalamet, and Cardi B.

Smoking has already made its way back on the covers of magazines. A media splash where the latest definition of cool starts, and when the "it" girl and beauty mogul Kylie Jenner recently graced the cover of Vanity Fair, sitting

And once again, they're being used to convey coolness rather than ill health.

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Never Give Up!

By Trish Dooley Budsock

Quitting smoking is one of the hardest things a person can do, and every step toward quitting matters. Nicotine is highly addictive, and many people try several times before they quit for good. That does not mean they have failed. Each quit attempt is a chance to learn what works, build confidence, and move closer to a healthier life. People trying to quit deserve support, encouragement, and compassion—not judgment. Even cutting back on smoking, or going one day without cigarettes, is progress worth celebrating.

There are many reasons people smoke, including stress, anxiety, trauma, or simply habit. Quitting can bring strong cravings, mood changes, and difficult emotions, especially

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Remembering 'Impermanence' to Deal with Cravings

By Azeem Sitabkhan

Continuing on my series of articles on the benefits of using mindfulness meditation to help with tobacco addiction, I wanted to bring up a very important, helpful facet of this practice. And that aspect is the concept of impermanence.

When we employ mindfulness techniques, one very crucial thing to recall is that all things change. At first this might seem like a bit of a bummer: "all things pass," is a source of great vitality and strength in meditation.

For example, if you're having an intense craving for a cigarette, remembering that all things change can help you relax and understand that this craving will pass in time too. This gives you the strength to withstand the craving again and again, until the urge passes completely from your system. It helps to balance you out and take this period in stride. If you can't understand that this unpleasant feeling will eventually pass, then it might be almost impossible to go work through those sensations.

In meditation, we always keep in mind that everything is transient in nature. Particularly important is to realize that all of our thoughts and feelings have this characteristic as well, so any difficult emotion will ultimately come to an end. This goes for outside circumstances, also, by helping to create a deep wellspring of fortitude and balance in the mind.

There are even deeper aspects to impermanence where things turn into a flow, and the actual experience of things passing becomes an energetic dance that gives vitality and pleasure. But for our purposes, it's enough to recall this fact in order to give us the capacity to endure unpleasant cravings and see them to their conclusion.

So always keep this thought in mind when going through a trying circumstance or situa-

tion. It will give you a reservoir of confidence to help you grapple with any painful or difficult time!



Beginner's mindfulness meditation to help when having a cigarette craving.



Begin in a comfortable seated position, straightening the spine and softening the rest of the body. When you feel ready, close your eyes as you relax.

Pause and notice

There is a craving present right now.

You don't need to fight it, and you don't need to obey it.

Observe it with curiosity.

Where do you feel it in your body?

Is it pressure, restlessness, tightness, heat, or something else?

Note that the craving is made up of sensations, thoughts, and urges.

Watch them come and go.

Like a wave, this craving rises, peaks, and eventually passes.

Breathing in, know that you are breathing in.

Breathing out, know that you are breathing out.

The craving is here, but it is not all of you.

You can allow it to be present without acting on it.

One breath at a time, one moment at a time.

The feeling is temporary.

You remain free to choose your next action.



This approach is sometimes called 'urge surfing'- observing the craving as a passing experience rather than immediately responding to it. Many people find that the intensity of a craving drops significantly within a few minutes when they stay present with it.

Nicotine Replacement Products are Still a Great Option for Quitting Smoking

By Cleo Zifovski

Quitting smoking is one of the best decisions someone can make for their health, but it's not always easy. That's why nicotine replacement products like patches, gum, and lozenges can be so helpful. These products work by giving the body a smaller, controlled amount of nicotine without all the harmful chemicals found in cigarettes. Studies have shown that people who use nicotine replacement therapy are much more likely to quit successfully than those who try to quit on their own [1]. Having support and tools during the quitting process can make a huge difference and help people stay on track.

There are also many health benefits that start almost immediately after quitting smoking: breathing becomes easier, blood pressure improves, and over time, the risk for heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer drops significantly. Research published in *The BMJ* found that nicotine replacement therapy is both safe and effective for smokers trying to cut back or quit completely [2]. Instead of going “cold turkey,” many people find that using nicotine replacement products helps lessen cravings and withdrawal symptoms, making the process feel more manageable and less overwhelming.

Quitting smoking doesn't just improve physical health — it can also improve daily life overall. Many former smokers report having more energy, better sleep, improved sense of taste and smell, and even extra money from no longer buying cigarettes. Research from BMC Public Health also showed that smoking cessation therapies can greatly improve long-term success rates for quitting [3]. Even though quitting can be hard, using evidence-based tools like nicotine replacement products can help people take an important step toward a healthier future.



Gum and Patch



Nicotine Nasal Spray

1. Hartmann-Boyce, J., Chepkin, S. C., Ye, W., Bullen, C., & Lancaster, T. (2018). Nicotine replacement therapy versus control for smoking cessation. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 2018(5), CD000146. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD000146.pub5>
2. Moore, D., Aveyard, P., Connock, M., Wang, D., Fry-Smith, A., & Barton, P. (2009). *Effectiveness and safety of nicotine replacement therapy assisted reduction to stop smoking: Systematic review and meta-analysis*. *BMJ*, 338, b1024. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.b1024>
3. Wu, P., Wilson, K., Dimoulas, P., & Mills, E. J. (2006). *Effectiveness of smoking cessation therapies: A systematic review and meta-analysis*. *BMC Public Health*, 6, 300. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-6-300>

Are Black and Milds a Good Idea for Cash Strapped Smokers?

By Lisa Evans

A lot of people who smoke struggle with the cost of cigarettes. Depending on the brand, retailer, and where you live, the average cost of a pack of cigarettes can range anywhere from \$9 to \$15. In some southern states, where tobacco is grown and cigarettes are manufactured, prices may be lower, averaging \$8 to \$9 per pack.

Research has shown that many people who smoke live in lower-income households, making it difficult to afford cigarettes regularly. To save money, some people turn to little cigars or cigarillos, such as Black & Mild. These products are often less expensive partially because cigars are taxed at a lower rate than cigarettes. When money is tight, people may purchase individual Black & Mild cigars for about \$2 each or buy a pack of five for around \$7 to maintain their nicotine addiction.

While this may seem like a practical way to reduce smoking costs, substituting cigars for cigarettes comes with important health concerns. According to the manufacturer's website, "Cigar and pipe smoking is addictive and causes serious diseases. Cigar and pipe smoking is not a safe alternative to cigarette smoking."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also warns that cigars contain many of the same toxic and cancer-causing chemicals found in cigarettes and can be just as addictive. Cigar smoking is linked to cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, larynx, and lungs. Regular cigar use also increases the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), coronary heart disease, gum disease, and tooth loss.

Even if a person does not inhale cigar smoke,



harmful chemicals and nicotine are still absorbed through the lining of the mouth. Although the health effects of occasional cigar smoking are less clear, no amount of cigar smoking is considered safe. Cigar smoke has the same toxic chemicals as cigarettes, and its secondhand smoke can cause cancer and illness in those who are exposed to it.

Rather than choosing between cigarettes and cigars, the healthiest option is to work toward quitting tobacco altogether. There is no safe form of tobacco use, but there are effective tools and support systems available to help people quit and improve their health.

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/nicotine-dependence/expert-answers/cigar-smoking/faq-20057787>

<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/other-tobacco-products/cigars-are-a-public-health-problem.html>



Average Retail Cigarette Costs

Data found on Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids website in table, State Excise and Sales Taxes Per Pack of Cigarettes, Total Amounts & State Rankings.

States	Average Retail Price Per Pack (with all taxes)	Cigarette Excise Tax Per Pack	State Sales Tax Per Pack	Total State Tax Per Pack	Total Tax Rank (Highest = 1)
Delaware	\$9.94	\$2.10	\$0.00	\$2.10	26th
New Jer-	\$11.66	\$3.00	\$0.72	\$3.72	14th
New York	\$14.83	\$5.35	\$0.57	\$5.92	1st
Pennsylv-	\$11.85	\$2.60	\$0.67	\$3.27	17th

The Health Benefits of Nicotine

By Deidre Stenard

For years, nicotine has gotten a negative reputation because of its association with smoking-related illnesses such as lung cancer, heart disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). However, science has increasingly shown that nicotine itself is not the direct cause of most smoking-related diseases—those arise from tar, combustion upon lighting, and the seven thousand harmful chemicals in tobacco smoke. When using nicotine separately from cigarettes, nicotine shows surprising benefits.

Cognitive and Mental Alertness

One of the most well-documented benefits of nicotine is its ability to enhance cognitive function. Studies have shown that nicotine improves attention span, working memory, and reaction times. People with Schizophrenia who use Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) when quitting smoking have said that they are more focused and mentally sharp due to NRT. NRT includes the nicotine patch, lozenge, gum and nasal spray.

Nicotine stimulates the release of dopamine, which plays a critical role in concentration and memory. Nicotine is just like caffeine in small, controlled doses-- it acts as a mild stimulant. The stimulant effect appeals to consumers that are on sedating medication. What we know at CHOICES is that getting nicotine separately after quitting smoking is the path of wellness.

Appetite Suppression

Another widely recognized benefit of nicotine is its role in curbing appetite. People who use nicotine often report reduced hunger. In fact, one reason many smokers gain weight after quitting is that they no longer benefit from nicotine's metabolic effects. Using Nicotine Replacement Therapy will

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Smoke is Smoke

By Dr. Jill Williams

Although tobacco use is at an all-time low, use of cannabis continues to rise in the United States. A major factor is the legalization of cannabis in nearly all states, including New Jersey. Daily or near daily use of cannabis is associated with more problems including more hospital admissions, higher risk for addiction and psychosis and more problems functioning at work or home.

More people are also co-using tobacco and cannabis. People who use cannabis wrapped in tobacco leaf (called blunts) can end up addiction to nicotine. Many of the same chemical toxins in cigarette smoke are also found in cannabis smoke, since they both burn and create products of combustion. Studies now show that due to the effects of smoke, people who smoke cannabis get more heart attacks, strokes, and other cardiovascular diseases. Users of both products may experience more negative effects on health and mental health, including higher risk for addiction.

Someone's desire to address cannabis and tobacco can differ. For example, someone may seek help for quitting smoking tobacco, yet feel they want to continue cannabis use. This complicates treatment since symptoms of withdrawal are quite similar for both, and continued cannabis use is associated with less success in quitting tobacco. Some studies show that people even use more cannabis when trying to quit tobacco.

Talking with anyone about the addiction potential of cannabis and health risks of smoking any substance can be important first steps to help people make healthy choices. Everyone should be aware of the risks of cannabis. Any products which are smoked can be toxic to the heart and cause significant health issues.

Cool Again? continued from page 1

on a bed striking a pose as she lights a cigarette. It's not the first image of the cosmetics founder lighting up—she smokes cigarettes in a music video with Charli XCX released earlier this year. And she's in famous company: From Sabrina Carpenter's pop songs to Dakota Johnson's movies, cigarettes seem to be everywhere.

"It's a reflection of the times," Mariah Wellman, a communication professor at Michigan State University who studies wellness rhetoric and influencers, tells Yahoo. If cigarettes are suddenly back



Sean Penn smoking at the 2026 Golden Globes Awards, a non-smoking event.

in style, it's because they suit the mood. "We have moved on from clean girl culture and we're interested in this sort of hedonistic, slightly rebellious, even nihilistic culture, where young celebrities are reinventing norms and what it means to be cool," says Wellman. Pop culture is starting to grow bored with being clean cut and more interested in looking messy and a little destructive—a vibe that suits cigarettes. In popular media, smoking signals someone is "cool, edgy and sexy," according to Grace Kong, an associate professor of psychiatry at Yale School of Medicine with expertise in preventing youth tobacco use.

This trend is so new that it might have been overlooked, and it might just be something that this generation does that will be forgotten down the road. Though lifetime smoking typically starts in the early 20's or younger, it can become a lifetime addiction and lead to chronic health problems.

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during the first few weeks. Support from family, friends, counselors, peer groups, and health care providers can make a big difference. Nicotine replacement therapies, medications, quitlines, and recovery supports can also help people stay on track. Most importantly, people should know they are not alone. Recovery from nicotine addiction is possible, with millions of people successfully quitting and going on to live healthier, fuller lives. And remember you always have CHOICES too! Check out more info here: njchoices.org

Health Benefits continued from page 5

help with appetite suppression and weight management after quitting smoking. It is safe to use nicotine for years after quitting smoking. I was on NRT for several years after I quit. Nicotine increases the body's metabolic rate, meaning it helps burn calories more effectively. It also influences brain pathways related to hunger, reducing cravings for fattening foods. For individuals struggling with their weight, nicotine-based therapies could become a potential tool for weight management. Research shows it can sharpen the mind, protect the brain, regulate mood, and suppress appetite. The real danger lies not in nicotine itself, but in combustible cigarettes and cigars. A few observations in this article stem from my own experience and experience from others in the field on CHOICES visits. If you would like more information on CHOICES, this newsletter is a good source of information. Our website is www.njchoices.org.

Instead of viewing nicotine as a negative, we can appreciate nicotine's surprising positive effects on health and how responsible use may improve quality of life.

Editorial Team, September 2, 2025,
<https://wellbeingmagazine.com/the-surprising-positive-effects-of-nicotine-on-health/>

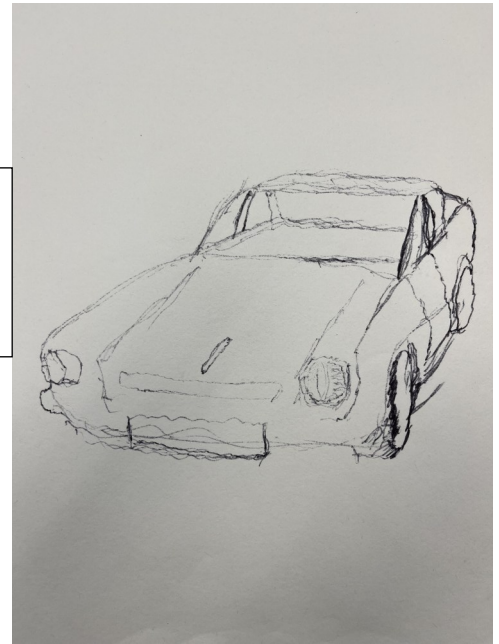


Creatively Inclined

CHOICES is proud of our peers who are creatively inclined in the arts, poetry, and writing. Are you an artist, poet, or writer and want to see your work in print? We would love to share your artwork, poem, or story!



These wonderful sketches were submitted by Terrance H., a very talented artist.



L.O.L! L.O.L! L.O.L!

By Terrance H

See answers below

1. I used to be a baker, but I couldn't make enough dough.

2. Why did the tomato turn red?

3. Why do kids hate school?

L.O.L! Answers

All jokes are either original by author or found in A Prairie Home Companion Pretty Good Joke Book 6th Edition.

2. Because he saw the salad dressing.
3. Because they're "Board" of education.



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The CHOICES team will come to you! The **CHOICES** team of peer advocates will visit your group or program in New Jersey and provide mental health consumers with education about the consequences of smoking and tobacco products along with information regarding treatment resources available to make quitting easier. Call us at 732-235-8232 to set up a date and time.



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