

## John's story

// I've been smoking all my life. I know it's not good for me, and I'll give up eventually, but at the moment I've just got too many other things going on. I'm also trying to deal with my alcohol problem at the moment, so I need to smoke to help me get through that. You can't give up two things at the same time can you? //



## Contacts

If you want to talk to someone about your own or someone else's alcohol or other drug use, you can get more information from:

ReGen  
1800 700 514 (Freecall)  
contact@regen.org.au  
www.regen.org.au

### **State-wide (Victoria):**

Quitline  
13 78 48  
www.quit.org.au

DirectLine (24/7 service offering counselling, information and referral)  
1800 888 236  
www.directline.org.au

Department of Health Website  
<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs>

### **Support & information for drug users from other drug using peers:**

Harm Reduction Victoria  
(03) 9329 1500  
www.hrvic.org.au

### **Support for family members or friends affected by a loved one's use:**

Family Drug Help  
1300 660 068  
www.familydrughelp.org.au

Thanks to ReGen's Consumer Consultants and Harm Reduction Victoria for their contributions to the development of ReGen's drug information leaflets.



# Tobacco

# Getting

# support

## Getting started

The thought of giving up cigarettes can be daunting. Maybe the prospect of changing your alcohol or other drug use is daunting enough and you think you need your cigarettes to help you through? Maybe you'll miss the rituals associated with your smoking as much as the nicotine (or more)?

Smoking has a significant impact on your wellbeing, but some of the benefits from cutting down or stopping can be felt pretty quickly. If you are already changing your habits around your alcohol and other drug use to improve your health, changing your smoking habits can increase the benefits.

If you're planning a withdrawal from alcohol or other drugs, it's important to remember that most publicly-funded residential services (including hospitals) now have smoking bans in place. ReGen's experience with tobacco-free withdrawal has shown that, with the right support, it can be a very positive experience for people who are already committed to making major changes in their lives.

## Changing your tobacco use

There are a number of great services or resources that you can utilise when thinking about changing your cigarette use, either separately or as part of your alcohol and other drug treatment (see the back of this leaflet). Here's some suggestions for how to get started:

### **Identify when and why you smoke**

- Many people smoke at certain times of the day and their smoking is linked to certain events, e.g. having a cigarette with their first cup of coffee in the morning. Keeping a diary of when you smoke will help you to identify particular patterns in your smoking.

### **Prepare to quit**

- Making a few simple preparations before you quit can increase your chances of success. Set a date to quit and think about how you will manage your cravings and distract yourself during the initial withdrawal period.
- There is also medication available to help you with cravings. These medications are prescription only and can cause side effects, so talk to your doctor about whether they would be suitable for you.

### **Consider alternatives to tobacco**

- There are a number of products that can be used to support you in quitting. These include nicotine replacement products such as patches, gum, lozenges or inhalers.

## Withdrawing from tobacco

Some people find they experience negative symptoms when they withdraw from the nicotine in tobacco. These usually peak within 48 hours, but most disappear within a month of giving up smoking. The urge to use tobacco can be present for longer, but many people find that after a month they get only occasional cravings which continue to decrease over time.

### **Withdrawal symptoms you may experience**

- Cravings to use tobacco
- Restlessness and difficulty sleeping
- Irritability and difficulty concentrating
- Headaches and anxiety
- Increased appetite
- Decreased heart rate
- Cold symptoms (as the lungs start to clear)

## Tips for getting through withdrawal

There are a number of things you can do to support yourself through nicotine withdrawal:

### **Remember why you're quitting**

- Make a list of all the reasons why you're quitting and all the benefits you'll experience (e.g. better health, more money). Keep the list somewhere handy and look at it when you are experiencing cravings.

### **Go easy on yourself**

- Avoid negative self-talk and remember that everyone has ups and downs during withdrawal. Focus on your reasons for change (see above).

### **Plan to keep busy**

- Make a list of things you can do to distract yourself at times when you would normally have a cigarette. This might include:
  - » Exercise (a great way to feel better as it releases natural 'feel good' chemicals in the brain)
  - » Phoning or meeting up with a friend or family member
  - » Taking up a new hobby (especially if it keeps your hands occupied)
  - » Doing something calming like yoga, meditation or deep breathing

### **Urge Surfing**

- If you get the urge to smoke, remember that this urge will pass. These cravings generally last between 3 – 5 minutes. Distract yourself with another activity, even if it is just chewing some gum or having a drink of water.

### **Understand your triggers and high risk situations**

- Which situations are most likely to tempt you to smoke? For some people it might be a certain time of day when they usually smoke (e.g. with a coffee in the morning, after the evening meal), or it might be certain places (e.g. at the pub). Think about how you will deal with those situations.