

## Naturopathic Protocols to Quit Smoking

Smoking, as we all know, affects the lungs and heart and puts people at greater risk for heart attacks and stroke, lung cancer (as well as throat, bladder, kidney, mouth, esophagus, colon and rectal cancers), and emphysema. Furthermore, smoking increases blood pressure and cholesterol, decreases sense of smell and taste, decreases fertility levels, and contributes to early menopause.

Smoking is an addiction that is tough to overcome. However, the benefits of quitting smoking are numerous: Studies show that when smokers quit:

- after 24 hours, heart attack risk decreases
- after 48 hours sense of smell and taste are enhanced,
- after 3 months lung capacity is increased by 30%
- after 9 months energy levels are increased
- after 5 years stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker
- after 10 years lung cancer risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker

The first step in quitting smoking is the desire to quit. People that are highly motivated to quit have much better success rates than those not highly motivated. The next step is to decide on a quit date and to quit cold turkey. Studies show that those who quit smoking cold turkey have higher success than those who wean themselves off cigarettes slowly. The third step is to get support from family and friends and to avoid temptation by getting rid of cigarettes, ash trays, and lighters from the house, car and living environments. Also, avoid drinking coffee or going to bars where the temptation to smoke will be higher.

Naturopathic doctors have natural smoking cessation protocols that can help support the body in the early stages of quitting. These protocols can help reduce withdrawal symptoms such as anxiety, irritability, sleeplessness, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, and cravings for nicotine. Naturopathic doctors treat the whole person, rather than just symptoms, so each person will be given an individualized treatment plan. In general, however, naturopathic doctors will improve the diet, prescribe vitamins, herbs and homeopathy, and perform acupuncture treatments for each individual undergoing a smoking cessation protocol.

Dietary recommendations involve a whole foods diet (no packaged/preserved foods), avoidance of sugar (which triggers the addictive center of the brain), and eating every three hours. Eating regular small meals (grazing) is important to balance blood sugars and reduce cravings. It is also important to drink 2 L of water a day with lemon to help rid the body of toxins.

Herbal remedies that support the body during smoking cessation and reduce symptoms of anxiety and nicotine cravings include: *Avena Sativa* (oat), *Passiflora incarnata* (Passionflower), *Lobelia inflata* (Indian tobacco), and *Eleutherooccus senticosus* (Siberian Ginseng).

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Homeopathic remedies can be prescribed to alleviate cravings. The homeopathic remedy *Tabacum* (tobacco) is very effective and should be kept on hand at all times.

Regular weekly acupuncture treatments for the first few weeks and months of quitting smoking are extremely effective in reducing the withdrawal symptoms and the cravings for smoking. Acupuncture helps relax the body and balances the nervous system. Auricular acupuncture (ear acupuncture) has been studied extensively in the treatment of drug and smoking withdrawal and is shown to be quite effective.

It is not too late to make a fresh start. Naturopathic protocols can be very helpful to achieve your goals of quitting smoking.