

Opioid use, smoking and pain: What to know

Start your smoke-free journey today.

Call your state quitline
at 800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669).

Cancer
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How is smoking associated with long-term pain?

Smoking increases the sensitivity of areas in the brain responsible for feeling pain.

- People who smoke use more pain-relieving medicine like opioids because nicotine causes greater sensitivity to pain.
- People who smoke may experience different pain thresholds and responses to pain treatment, putting them at risk for opioid addiction.
- 50% of patients looking for pain-related treatment smoke cigarettes.
- People who smoke or used to smoke are more likely to have lower back pain.
- People who smoke are 1.5 times more likely to report headaches.
- Smoking is associated with a 30% greater chance for tooth pain, mouth sores and oral pain.



Smoking and opioid use: it goes both ways.

- People with opioid use disorders are more likely to smoke.
- Tobacco use is a strong predictor of prescription opioid misuse.

Common myths about smoking and opioid treatment:

MYTH: Quitting smoking while dealing with opioid addiction will interfere with treatment.

TRUTH: Quitting smoking can support recovery from opioid addiction.

- Tobacco use can result in continued opioid use and less success during recovery.
- Tobacco use is related to not completing opioid use treatment programs.
- Quitting smoking is associated with long-term opioid use abstinence.
- Including smoking cessation services into addiction treatment is beneficial and is an important part of managing pain throughout recovery.

MYTH: Smoking has beneficial psychological benefits.

TRUTH: Nicotine is a stimulant and worsens mental health issues like depression and anxiety.

- Smoking a cigarette subdues nicotine withdrawal. While people often perceive this as relief, it is actually only the addiction to nicotine that has been gratified.
- Quitting smoking has benefits to overall well-being, including physical and mental wellness.
- Quitting smoking decreases anxiety and promotes psychological well-being, which can help with opioid use recovery.

Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health.

Consider the following if you want to quit smoking:

- Seek professional help for treatment plans that address both smoking and opioid use.
- Consider nicotine replacement therapies to help manage withdrawal symptoms from stopping smoking.
- Engage in counseling or therapy to modify habits and identify coping strategies.
- Find healthy ways to cope with triggers for both smoking and opioid use.
- Establish achievable goals and milestones for quitting.

How to get help:

- Ask your health care provider or substance use counselor for help quitting.
- Call 800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669) for free help from your state's tobacco quitline.
- Visit SmokeFree.Gov for a step-by-step guide to quit smoking.

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