

'after abrupt cessation of tobacco use, or reduction in the amount of tobacco used, followed within 24 hours by four or more of the following signs or symptoms:

- irritability, frustration, anger
- anxiety
- difficulty in concentration
- increased appetite
- restlessness
- depressed mood
- insomnia.⁷⁹

To meet the DSM-5 definition: 'these symptoms need to cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning, and not be attributable to another medical condition or better explained by another mental disorder, including intoxication or withdrawal from another substance.'⁷⁹

Other nicotine withdrawal symptoms may include:⁸⁰

- craving for sweet or sugary foods
- constipation
- coughing
- dizziness
- dreaming/nightmares
- nausea
- mouth ulcers
- sore throat.

It is important to inform the person beginning a first or subsequent quit attempt that they may experience nicotine withdrawal symptoms when quitting.

Usually, nicotine withdrawal symptoms begin within 24 hours of the last cigarette and are strongest in the first week (but for some people only in the first 2–3 days). For most people, withdrawal symptoms decline steadily and can disappear after approximately 2–4 weeks.⁸⁰ Symptoms can occur for other reasons, so caution should be exercised in attributing them to nicotine withdrawal.

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms can be reframed as recovery symptoms. Pharmacotherapies will reduce or completely prevent withdrawal symptoms.⁸¹

Urges to smoke and cravings for nicotine are elements of withdrawal, and are strong predictors of relapse.⁸¹ Providing strategies to manage withdrawal is an essential aspect of the healthcare professional's role:

- Quitline services offer a number of patient calls, especially in the first few weeks, to help and encourage those who smoke in a quit attempt to stay on track.
- Smoking cessation pharmacotherapies can prevent or reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms.^{81,89}
- There is evidence that exercise can help reduce acute cravings and nicotine withdrawal for some people.⁸²