

Alcohol and Other Drugs

Understanding tobacco.

1800 700 514 (Freecall)
unitingvictas.org.au/aod

What is tobacco?

Tobacco is a plant that contains a naturally occurring chemical called nicotine. Tobacco has a stimulant effect, speeding up the messages sent between the brain and body. Tobacco is still one of the most used drugs in Australia, even though its use is steadily declining. There is overwhelming evidence that it harms nearly every organ in your body.

Common effects include:

- Reduce stress
- Distract from something else
- Manage discomfort and irritation

Negative effects include:

- Loss of taste and smell
- Easily irritated
- Loss of sensation in hands and feet
- Hard to cope without
- Susceptible to colds and often feeling unwell
- Expensive to maintain the habit
- Increased risk of heart disease and cancers
- Smoke smell stays in clothes, hair and around the house
- Other people inhale the smoke (called 'passive smoking')

Often smoking can be part of a routine, such as waking up in the morning or after a meal. Over time it can become so habitual that you don't even realise how often you're having a smoke.

Cutting down or quitting

Some people feel that quitting is too much, or they'd prefer to cut down before attempting to stop. Whatever your plans, it's best to consider how you want to approach this reduction.

Pay attention to how often and what times you smoke. Some of these times will be tied to other activities like having a meal or going to bed, or they might be related to a particular place. You can make a list and pick one or two that you think are easiest to skip. It's good to start small so you can build up confidence and momentum.

Some other ideas for cutting back include:

- Prepare for an increase in appetite
- Carry healthy snacks with you (such as nuts and seeds)
- Carry a water bottle and have small sips of water regularly
- Keep your hands occupied
- Focus on deep breathing and pay attention to your breath
- Find new things to associate with a craving, replacing the ritual.

You might be worried about cutting down on tobacco while trying to give up other substances, however research has shown that changing both behaviours together leads to fewer lapses and a greater sense of control for people.

The future is bright.



Withdrawal

If you've made the decision to take a break from smoking or stop completely, good on you. The physical symptoms of withdrawal won't last long, and for most people the worst is over within a week. Everyone experiences this differently, though there are some common symptoms:

1-3 days	Coughing up phlegm, feeling angry and irritable, having over-exaggerated emotions, some trouble going to the toilet.
7 days	Clearer eyes, clearer skin, finger stains fade, feeling of breathlessness fades, cravings begin to subside, more energy, improved sense of smell and taste.
1 month	Feeling you have more time in the day, noticing your clothing doesn't smell as bad, saving money, emotions more manageable, you don't get as sick, improved blood flow.

Nicotine replacement therapies (NRT) can help significantly with managing withdrawal symptoms. These include patches, mouth sprays, gums, lozenges and inhalers. You can also talk to a medical professional about other medications to manage longer term cravings.

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 these Victorian and Tasmanian state-wide services. If you are located in another state, these contacts will direct you to your local support services:

DirectLine

24/7 service offering counselling, information and referrals.

T 1800 888 236

directline.org.au

Harm Reduction Victoria

Support and information from other drug using peers.

T 03 9329 1500

hrvic.org.au

QUIT

T 13 78 48

quit.org.au

Family Drug and Gambling Help

Victorian support for family members.

T 1300 660 068

sharc.org.au/sharc-programs/family-drug-gambling-help

Drug alerts

health.vic.gov.au/alcohol-and-drugs/drug-alerts

Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Tasmania Service Directory

atdc.org.au/service-directory

Alcohol and Drug Information Service TAS

24/7 service offering counselling, information and referrals.

T 1800 811 994

Uniting would like to thank consumer partners for drawing on their lived experience to contribute to this series of publications.

