

# Crush your cigarette cravings

## Exercise is hard enough without 50 different toxins in your lungs

It's no wonder you don't find many smokers running marathons. But the truth is, exercise is a great way to help you quit smoking. Exercise works because it helps manage energy levels, moods and weight gain.<sup>1</sup>

Research has found that just 10 minutes of exercise reduced cravings for regular smokers. The study also showed that exercise made cigarettes appear less attractive to smokers.<sup>2</sup>

And it's been found that exercise helps smokers with a high risk of relapse because of emotional distress, since exercise can reduce anxiety sensitivity and depressive symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

## Start at the right pace<sup>5</sup>

If you just stopped smoking, ease yourself into exercising with low-intensity cardiovascular (also called aerobic) or light strength training (also called weight lifting) exercises. Starting an exercise program at a high intensity right after you quit smoking could be dangerous.

Start by exercising at a low intensity for short durations. Walking, biking or swimming for 15 to 20 minutes at a time is a good way to increase your cardiovascular endurance after you quit smoking.

Gradually work your way up to moderate-intensity cardiovascular exercises for durations of 30 to 60 minutes at a time. To achieve substantial health benefits, it's advised that adults participate in at least 2 1/2 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic exercises every week and strength-training activities at least two times per week.



Anthem Blue Cross is the trade name of Blue Cross of California. Anthem Blue Cross and Anthem Blue Cross Life and Health Insurance Company are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Association. ANTHEM is a registered trademark of Anthem Insurance Companies, Inc. The Blue Cross name and symbol are registered marks of the Blue Cross Association.

38740CAMEABC 06/16



Some smokers are afraid of feeling sick without nicotine. But exercise can help here, too by reducing the worst symptoms of smoking withdrawal, such as:<sup>4</sup>

- Irritability
- Depression
- Restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Stress

Exercise can also lead to better overall health and well-being, and can help quitters shed unwanted weight.

**Cardiovascular, or aerobic, exercises include those that work large muscle groups and get your heart rate up for a sustained period. Strength training or weight lifting exercises improve muscle tone and strength.**

### Sources:

- 1 American Lung Association website: American Lung Association Offers Tips to Make Quit-Smoking New Year's Resolutions Stick (December 2012); lung.org/february/title\_2600\_en.html
- 2 University of Exeter website: First brain study reveals benefits of exercise on quitting smoking (February 2009); http://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/archive/2009/02/exer/exer09.htm
- 3 University of Texas; http://news.utexas.edu/2016/02/24/exercise-helps-smokers-with-high-anxiety-sensitivity-quit
- 4 National Center for Biotechnology Information website: The effect of exercise in reducing desire to smoke and cigarette withdrawal symptoms is not caused by distraction (August 2006); http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16869848
- 5 Livestrong.com; http://www.livestrong.com/article/551728-how-do-i-get-my-cardio-up-fast-if-i-just-stopped-smoking/ (July 2015)