

**New York State
Smokers' Quitline**

1-866-NY-QUITS

(1-866-697-8487)

www.nysmokefree.com

TTY: 1-800-280-1213

HOW TO:

RELAX WITHOUT SMOKING



You may still want a cigarette whenever you start relaxing, especially if you had been doing so for years. It can be harder to relax and unwind when you first stop smoking, so you might find yourself reaching for a cigarette—or thinking about it—**SO PLANNING AHEAD FOR THESE TIMES IS KEY.**

Why does this happen?

- ❑ When nicotine enters your brain, it acts like some of the natural chemicals that control arousal, alertness, and mood. Because of the effects of nicotine, these chemical changes can make you feel happy, less anxious, and more relaxed.
- ❑ When you quit smoking, your brain activity slowly returns to normal. The natural chemicals in your body will still regulate arousal, alertness and mood, but for a while you may miss the instant kick that cigarettes provided.

How common is this?

- ❑ Many smokers report that they notice increased or higher anxiety within one week of quitting. They report feeling uneasy, worried, or troubled.
- ❑ If you feel anxious, it will usually begin within the first 24 hours after quitting, peak in the first 1-2 weeks, and disappear within a month.

What can you do about it?

- ❑ Repeat this to yourself: "I can learn to relax without having a cigarette."
- ❑ Engage in activities that use your hands, like sewing, carving, doing puzzles, playing cards, etc.
- ❑ Make an extra effort to share your leisure time with a friend, a child or even a pet.
- ❑ If the urge to smoke gets too strong, stop relaxing and start doing something physical until the urge passes.
- ❑ Deep breathing is a good way to deal with tension almost anywhere and at any time.

It isn't "just in your head"...cigarettes did make you feel relaxed because they relieved the anxiety of nicotine withdrawal, but as your body recovers from nicotine dependence, this will get easier.