



HEALTH AWARENESS

This Is Your Brain On Nicotine: How Your Brain Reacts To Cigarettes



(NAPSA)—Public smoking bans. Smoke-free workplaces. Cigarette taxes and price hikes. Warnings about cancer and heart disease.

There are a lot of reasons to quit smoking. Approximately 70 percent of smokers want to quit. And, the average smoker has tried to quit six to nine times. Still, there are 45 million smokers in the U.S. There are 388 billion cigarettes smoked each year. What is it about cigarettes that keeps smokers hooked?

Health experts say that nicotine, one of the main chemicals in cigarettes and tobacco, causes addiction. It affects the brain in a unique way. It makes people want to smoke.

“When you smoke, nicotine binds to certain parts of your brain. This causes a good feeling,” says Dr. Robert Anthenelli, associate professor of Psychiatry at the

University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. “When you stop smoking, your brain no longer gets nicotine. Then you have craving and withdrawal symptoms.”

Many smokers who try to quit find the craving for cigarettes too hard to control. The withdrawal symptoms are hard to live with. Smokers may feel moody or have trouble sleeping. They seek relief by going back to cigarettes.

“Craving or withdrawal symptoms make you want cigarettes. You smoke, you feel better. The cycle of nicotine addiction starts again,” says Dr. Anthenelli. “We need to treat smoking as a medical condition. It’s important to use medication and lifestyle changes to stay on track.”

If you want to quit smoking, talk to your doctor about the best way for you to quit.