



Does smoking and vaping help relieve stress? NO!

When you have a cigarette or e-cigarette, the nicotine causes your brain to release a chemical called dopamine, which makes you feel good, but only for a short time.

Nicotine also triggers the body's flight or fight response – **heart rate and blood pressure increase along with a chemical called cortisol, which can make you feel anxious.**

As you become addicted to nicotine, your brain needs more and more of it to make you 'feel good'. When the effect of the cigarette wears off after a short time, **you start to go through nicotine withdrawal**, leading to cravings and feelings of stress, irritability or anxiety. So when you have a cigarette to relax, all you are really doing is relieving your nicotine withdrawal.

Nicotine can cause changes in your brain, affecting learning, attention and mood, particularly in young people.

People who smoke or vape are twice as likely to experience depression and anxiety as those who don't.

Quitting smoking or vaping is hard, and some people might feel their mental health gets worse at first so it is important to get support. But those who do quit **usually notice improvements in depression and anxiety within 2 months.**

Quitting smoking can make some mental health medications work better. It is very important to work with your doctor when you quit in case your medication needs adjusting.

Smoking, vaping and mental health

THE FACTS!

The stress cycle of smoking.

1. When You light up a smoke, it tops up your nicotine levels.
2. Your nicotine withdrawal symptoms are relieved straight away, but only for a short time.
3. soon after you've finished having a smoke, your nicotine levels begin to fall leaving you craving another smoke and starting to feel stressed.
4. once your nicotine levels have dropped even more, you begin to experience withdrawal symptoms including irritability, anxiety, headaches and difficulty concentrating.

Smoking can also cause stress in other ways

- > Smoking is expensive, leading to **worry about money.**
- > Smokers need to plan where and when they can have their next cigarette, particularly when working or traveling on public transport, which can be overwhelming.

Other ways to manage stress

- Exercise improves mood and concentration**, helps manage cravings and reduces depression and anxiety.
- Even a 20-minute walk** can improve your mood but choose any exercise that you enjoy.
- Healthy eating is very important** for good mental health.
- Eating regularly**, including fruit and vegetables in your diet and drinking plenty of water can help. Talk to your doctor, dietitian or Aboriginal Health Worker for more advice.
- > **Talk to a mental health professional**
- > **Mindfulness & Meditation**
- > **Relaxation techniques**
- > **Art & Craft or yarn to a friend**



Talk to your GP or Pharmacist for further advice or call Quitline on the number above.

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