

ASK THE DOCTOR

Everyday Activities Can “Trigger” Cigarette Cravings

(NAPSA)—While most smokers are well aware that quitting can be an intense battle, many underestimate the severity of cravings that may follow and their potential to steer a smoker to relapse.

Smoking increases brain activity that thrives on nicotine and frequent smoking in the same circumstances—like while driving, drinking coffee or talking on the phone. Experts call this a situational craving, and it can make quitting without help feel like climbing a personal Mount Everest. Situational cravings are a major cause of lapses when a smoker is trying to quit.

Although there are a lot of normal, everyday activities that may trigger a smoker to light up another cigarette, you need not lock yourself in captivity to try to quit successfully. Smokers need to learn how to easily manage cravings and control urges when exposed to surroundings that may tempt them to smoke.

Dr. Drew Pinsky, addiction expert nationally known for his syndicated radio talk show, *LoveLine*, and the VH1 shows, *Celebrity Rehab with Dr. Drew* and *Sober House with Dr. Drew*, offers information about situational cravings and how smokers can gain control of their cravings more easily.

What does the term “situational craving” mean?

When a smoker is trying to quit, being in everyday situations the smoker usually associates with smoking—drinking coffee, office breaks, driving, talking on the telephone, after meals, drinking alcohol, etc.—can cause the smoker to experience cravings. These cravings are called situational cravings and are a major reason many smokers pick up cigarettes again. Frequent smoking in certain situa-



tions creates triggers that become everyday associations with smoking and these cravings can sabotage willpower.

What are some common smoking triggers?

Every smoker has certain times when they automatically reach for a cigarette, and there are many! Some of the more common triggers include bad moods, seeing someone smoke or smelling smoke, drinking alcohol, waking up first thing in the morning, drinking coffee, talking on the telephone, after meals, seeing a pack in an advertisement, driving, or office breaks. A smoker trying to quit should identify those situations and determine ways to avoid or deal with each of those triggers while going through the quitting process.

Are there certain smoking cessation treatments that can help control situational cravings?

Not every stop-smoking treatment addresses situational cravings, so it is important to read a product's label to understand how the product works. Studies have shown that using any form of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT),

such as the Nicorette® gum and lozenge and the NicoDerm® CQ® patch, can significantly reduce cravings within minutes. NRT can help calm cravings quickly by giving the brain the nicotine it needs and allowing smokers to wean off nicotine gradually and safely. That quick craving relief is important in ensuring you don't return to cigarettes. Smokers using NRT to aid in quitting smoking can double their chances of success versus quitting placebo. NRT is available over-the-counter at 35,000 retail stores across the U.S., which makes it convenient and readily available when fighting off cravings.

What are some simple steps to successful quitting?

It is important to determine a method for quitting smoking that works best for you, but the method should address both nicotine withdrawal cravings and changing smoking habits. Using NRT, such as gum, patch or lozenge, can reduce cravings fast. Smokers trying to quit should also avoid situations that may bring on the urge to smoke and try to lower stress levels by participating in physical activities and activities that include listening to music or going for a walk. Also, I think everyone should have a quitting “buddy” to call to help you through the tough times.

Smokers have a difficult road to face when trying to quit, but they need not face it alone. Nicorette.com and facebook.com/nicorette contain helpful information to help smokers better understand and address their cravings as well as their habit, and help them develop an individualized plan to satisfy the ultimate craving: for a smoke- and cigarette-free life.