

# Nicotine and the Brain

When you're ready to quit smoking, you're on your way to doing an incredibly good thing for yourself.

So here's a little advice from others who've been where you are right now: Now is a great time to talk to your doctor.

Because quitting is more than just changing a habit.

Your body also needs to stop craving the nicotine.

Nicotine is just one of the thousands of chemicals in tobacco.

But it's the one that goes right to your head—that is, right to your brain.

About 10 seconds after you take a puff, nicotine has made its way from your lungs to your blood to your brain.

Nicotine fits right into parts of your brain called receptors.

They tell your brain to release chemicals that make you feel alert, less anxious, and relaxed.

Nicotine causes your brain to grow more receptors.

And then more chemicals are released.

Then when you quit smoking, suddenly there are all these extra receptors, but no nicotine.

So you start feeling irritated, annoyed, and stressed out.

Your brain is going through nicotine withdrawal.

Here's some good news.

The withdrawal effects don't last forever.

With a little time, your brain adjusts.

The effects are at their worst in the first couple of days.

And, although they may last a few weeks or even a few months, your doctor can help.

You can ask about ways to help reduce nicotine cravings such as stop-smoking programs, counseling options, or medicines.

Be kind to yourself while your body and brain heal.

It may take time and even a few tries, but with help, you can make it happen.