Smoking Cessation with TCM

According to CDC analyzed data from the 2008 National Health Interview Survey, an estimated 46 million people or 20.6% of all adults (aged 18 years and older) in the United States currently smoke cigarettes. Cigarette smoking is more common among men (23.1%) than women (18.3%).

The reasons to quit smoking are endless. Cigarette smoke contains at least 250 chemicals known to be toxic or carcinogenic (cancer-causing). These include nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide, as well as formaldehyde, ammonia, hydrogen cyanide, arsenic and DDT.

Overall, smokers are less healthy than nonsmokers. Smoking affects the immune system, which increases a person's risk for infections. Smoking also increases the risk for fractures, dental diseases, sexual problems, eye diseases, and peptic ulcers. Cigarette smoking can cause many chronic diseases, such as lung cancer and many other forms of cancer; heart disease; and respiratory diseases, including emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and pneumonia. According to the CDC analyzed data, about 443,000 people (nearly 1 of every 5 people) die prematurely as a result of smoking each year.

The CDC states that among current U.S. adult smokers, 70% report that they want to quit completely, and millions have attempted to quit smoking. Each year, hundreds of people try to quit smoking with the help of hypnosis, nicotine gum, prescription non-nicotine medications, behavioral cessation therapies, and/or counseling.

However, overcoming the nicotine addiction is very difficult and may require multiple attempts. In fact, research suggests that nicotine is as addictive as heroin, cocaine, or alcohol. It is estimated that most smokers will attempt to quit two or three times, or more, before finally kicking the habit. When conventional methods to quit smoking have failed, smokers often look outside mainstream approaches and turn to alternative medicine.

Stop Smoking with TCM

Acupuncture for Smoking Cessation

Acupuncture is a highly effective quit smoking method for all, and especially for those who had been unsuccessful with other methods to stop smoking. In fact, acupuncture is often a court mandated treatment for full range of addictions and addictive behavior because of its ability to reduce cravings and alleviate withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, anxiety and difficulty concentrating.

In a study conducted at the University of Oslo, Oslo, Norway, acupuncture was found to significantly reduce the desire to smoke up to five years after the initial treatment (He et al, 2001). According to a randomized, single-blind, placebo-controlled study, a single treatment of electro-acupuncture using two needles plus self-retained ear seeds for two weeks shows significant effectiveness in helping smokers to quit smoking than placebo treatment (Waite & Clough, 1998). Another randomized trial on 141 adult smokers shows that acupuncture and education, alone and in combination,
significantly reduce smoking; however, combined they show a significantly greater effect, as seen in subjects with a greater pack-year history (Bier et al, 2002).

Acupuncture works to adjust cravings by balancing the body's brain chemistry and is also useful to help heal the damage caused by smoking. The effects of acupuncture in the smoking cessation are:

- **Acupuncture helps to eliminate the nicotine withdrawal symptoms**  The most common nicotine withdrawal symptoms include irritability, anxiety, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and increased appetite. Acupuncture is highly effective in diminishing these withdrawal symptoms by stimulating endorphin release. Endorphins are the natural chemicals produced by the body which relieve pain and increase a sense of relaxation and contentment. When inserted into the body, acupuncture stimulates the nervous system to regulate the amount of natural endorphins in the body and helps calm and relax the mind, enhance the ability to concentrate, minimize anxiety, and alleviate.

- **Acupuncture can detoxify the body of nicotine**  Acupuncture can increase the body’s ability to process toxins and heavy metals accumulated from tobacco use by improving circulation of Qi and blood and enhancing the function of the lung, liver, and spleen. In TCM, the lung governs inhalation, the spleen governs transformation and transportation of the substances; and the liver governs smooth flow of Qi throughout the whole body. By improving the functions of these organ systems, acupuncture can help detoxify and eliminate the nicotine and other chemicals introduced by cigarettes.

- **Acupuncture changes the taste of cigarettes**  One of the possible contributions to smoking cessation is a change in the taste of smoke after acupuncture treatments. Many people come to realize that cigarettes taste like burning ash or bitter. This unpleasant and distasteful taste of cigarettes makes patients unable to finish the whole length of a cigarette and lose the urge to smoke. In clinical trials, acupuncture treatments induced a bitter taste in the mouth when smoking cigarettes which helps reduce craving for smoking. Subjects of the study reported that cigarettes tasted worse than before the treatment and that the treatments had effectively reduced their taste for tobacco (He et al, 2001).

**Acupuncture / Ear Acupuncture Procedure**

Each acupuncture treatment involves the insertion of sterile, disposable needles into specific acupuncture points on the body. Usually a combination of body acupuncture points and ear points are used to influence the organs and energetic pathways associated with smoking. Commonly used acupuncture points for smoking cessation include:

**Ear points (NADA protocol):**

- **Shen Men**  Reduces stress, anxiety, and excessive sensitivity, enhances the functions of other acupuncture points

- **Sympathetic**  Balances sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, improves blood circulation
• **Kidney**  Reinforces the function of kidneys

• **Liver**  Promotes smooth flow of Qi and blood, helps the body’s detoxification, relaxes the muscles and tendons

• **Lower Lung**  Promotes smooth flow of Qi and blood, nourishes the skin and hair, treats addiction related lung issues

**Body Points:**

• **Tim Mee**  An extra-meridian point specifically used for smoking cessation. This point is located on the wrist, in a depression between the tendons that make up the anatomical snuffbox.

• **Li 4 and Lv 3**  This acupuncture combination is often called ‘the Four Gate Points’. These points are used to circulate Qi throughout the body, regulate the nervous system, and calm the mind.

The acupuncture needles will be remained for 20-30 minutes. After removing the needles, small ear pellets or ear seeds made of Chinese herb Wang Bu Liu Xing (Semen Vaccariae) will be taped to the ear and remained in place for couple days to maintain the stimulation. The patients will be advised to apply gentle pressure on the pellets to stimulate the acupuncture points on the ear when a cigarette craving hits.

**Chinese Herbal Medicine**

In addition to acupuncture treatment, Chinese herbal medicine is often used to restore the balance of the body, help repair damaged tissues from smoking, and control cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

The most commonly used herbal formulas are:

• **Mai Men Dong Tang**  This Lung Yin supplementing formula is often used to moisten the lungs and mouth which can prevent cravings and repair tissue damage caused by smoking.

• **Chai Hu Jia Long Gu Mu Li Tang**  This calming spirit formula is often used to relieve irritability and anxiety associated with detoxification. Many people use this formula to help them through stressful situations and prevent relapses.

• **Ban Bian Lian (Lobelia) tea or Green Tea**  They can be sipped daily during the detoxifying period to keep tissues flooded with elements that discourage nicotine cravings. Lobelia is traditionally used to rid the body of a strong toxin such as a snake bite.

**Treatment Plan**

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The length, number and frequency of treatments vary depending on the individual smoking history. The degree of addiction to nicotine, the length of time cigarettes has been smoked, how many cigarettes are smoked per day, and the patient’s will-power will largely determine the number of treatments needed. Other important considerations include the individual unique constitution and the function of the primary organ systems responsible for detoxification, including the lung, liver, kidney and spleen.

Generally, 4 to 6 acupuncture treatments during the first two weeks are required to help reducing the craving for cigarettes and initiating detoxification process. Although some patients quit smoking after 2-3 sessions of acupuncture treatment, average of 5-8 sessions can help most of the smokers quit smoking or greatly reduce the amount of cigarettes.

Once the physiological and psychological dependence on the nicotine has been reduced and the patient has become able to reduce the number of cigarettes, monthly follow-up treatments for 4-6 months are recommended to consolidate the effects. If life stressors or complicating circumstances are in play, then additional treatments may be necessary to preserve the positive results.

NADA Special at AWC

About NADA (National Acupuncture Detoxification Association) Protocol

In the mid-1970s, Dr. Michael Smith at Lincoln Hospital in New York modified an existing system of auricular acupuncture into a simple technique for the treatment of addictions as an alternative to methadone. This selection of ear points proved to be extremely effective in the treatment of many common drug addictions, and became what is now referred to as ‘NADA Protocol’.

At first, NADA protocol was used solely on Methadone addicts, but then expanded in the treatment of all drug, alcohol and smoking addictions. Today, people across the United States receive detoxification acupuncture in hospitals, prison systems, through drug court alternative sentencing, alcohol and substance abuse counseling agencies and other private clinics.

NADA protocol involves the insertion of 5 small acupuncture needles into specific locations in the ear that stimulate the lung, liver, kidney and nervous system. The combination of these points aids in detoxification and restoring systemic equilibrium.

NADA Special at NOLA Acupuncture Wellness Center

In order to maximize the effect of acupuncture in smoking cessation and decrease the financial burden of the patients, NOLA Acupuncture Wellness Center provides a special package deal named ‘NADA Special’.
This special deal provides a 30 minute treatment using NADA protocol (the insertion of 5 acupuncture needles on the each ear followed by the application of ear pellets) for $20 per session. The patients will be treated ideally every other day, or at least two times a week.

Advanced payment for weekly or monthly treatments is required to encourage the patients to receive regular and consistent acupuncture treatments. For more information, call us at 504-362-8020.

### Tips to Stop Smoking

When an urge to use tobacco strikes, remember that although it may be intense, it will be short, and it probably will pass within a few minutes whether you smoke a cigarette or not. Each time you resist a craving, you're one step closer to stopping smoking or other tobacco use for good.

Here are 10 ways to help you resist cravings or urges to smoke cigarettes.

1. **Delay.** If you feel like you're going to give in to your craving, tell yourself that you must wait 10 more minutes and then do something to distract yourself. This simple trick may be enough to derail your tobacco craving. Repeat as often as needed.

2. **Don't have 'just one.'** You may be tempted to have just one cigarette to stop a craving. But don't fool yourself into believing that you can stop at just one. More often than not, having just one leads to another, then another — and you may wind up back in the habit.

3. **Avoid triggers.** Urges for tobacco are likely to be strongest in the situations where you smoked or chewed tobacco most often. Identify your trigger spots or people and have a plan in place so that you can avoid them entirely or get through them without using tobacco. Don't set yourself up for a relapse. If you usually smoked while you talked on the phone, for instance, keep a pen and paper nearby instead for doodling rather than smoking.

4. **Get physical.** Physical activity can help distract you from tobacco cravings and reduce the intensity of cravings. Just 30 minutes of moderate physical activity can make a craving go away. Get out for a walk or jog. If you're stuck at home or the office, try squats, deep knee bends, push-ups, running in place, or walking up and down a set of stairs a few times. If physical activity doesn't interest you, try prayer, needlework, woodwork or journaling. Or do chores for distraction, such as vacuuming or filing paperwork.

5. **Practice relaxation techniques.** Coping with a craving to smoke or use tobacco can be very stressful. In the past, smoking may have been your way to deal with stress. Take the edge off your stress by practicing relaxation techniques. These include deep-breathing exercises, muscle relaxation, yoga, visualization, hypnosis and massage.
6. **Call reinforcements.** Touch base with a family member, friend or support group member for moral support. Chat on the phone, go for a walk together or simply share a few laughs, or get together to commiserate about your cravings.

7. **Remember the benefits of quitting.** Write down or say out loud the reasons you want to stop smoking and resist cravings. These might include feeling better, getting healthier, sparing your loved ones from secondhand smoke or saving money. And if you're a closet smoker, you may save hours of time since you no longer have to spend time trying to creatively conceal your habit.

8. **Go online.** Join an online stop-smoking program. Or read a quitter's blog and post encouraging thoughts for someone else who might be struggling with cravings. Learn from how others have handled their tobacco cravings.

9. **Try replacements.** Try a stop-smoking product instead of a cigarette. Some types of nicotine replacement therapy, including patches, gums and lozenges, are available over-the-counter. Nicotine nasal spray and the nicotine inhaler are available by prescription, as are the stop-smoking medications bupropion (Zyban) and varenicline (Chantix).

10. **Chew on it.** Give your mouth something to do. Chew on sugarless gum or hard candy. Or munch on something crunchy and satisfying such as raw carrots, celery, nuts or sunflower seeds.

This information is from [MayoClinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

### References


