

# SMOKING & YOUR SPINE

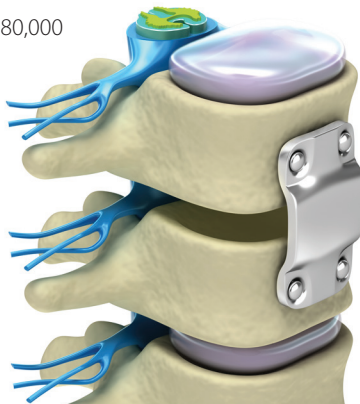


**According to the US Surgeon General, the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives is to stop smoking.**

Research studies related to spinal fusion have shown that those who smoke can reduce the likelihood of a successful spine surgery. Smoking and nicotine inhibits bone growth, which is essential for a successful spinal fusion. Consequently, many spine surgeons require a patient to stop smoking for six weeks prior to a spinal fusion surgery, and for a couple months after the surgery to assist with a successful fusion. Nicotine and smoking reduces the nutrients to the fusion site due to a lack of blood supply. The research shows that non-smokers typically do better overall with spine surgery compared to heavy smokers. While most people know smoking can cause lung cancer, others are not aware that smoking also causes dozens of other types of cancers throughout the human body.

Each year, smoking causes the early deaths of nearly 480,000 people in the United States. Smoking accounts for 30 percent of all cancer deaths and 87 percent of lung cancer deaths. The risk of developing lung cancer is about 23 times higher in male smokers compared to non-smokers; and smoking is associated with the increased risk of at least 15 other types of cancer.

If you smoke, and you also need spine surgery to get over a back or neck problem, this is perhaps the best time ever to quit the habit.



## **What is the best way to quit the smoking habit**

For most people, the best way to quit will be some combination of medication, and a personalized plan to handle the physical and emotional hardships of quitting smoking. Medication may include nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), as well as medicines and other methods to deal with the physical part of withdrawal.



**Kenai Spine**

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Educational Internet site with home remedies & symptom charts at: [KenaiSpine.com](http://KenaiSpine.com)

# Quitting smoking: some options and benefits

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Nicotine is a drug found naturally in tobacco and can be as addictive as heroine or cocaine. Nicotine affects many parts of your body, including your heart, blood vessels, hormones, metabolism, and your brain.**

## WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO QUIT SMOKING?

The answer is mainly nicotine. Over the course of decades of smoking daily, a person becomes physically and emotionally addicted to nicotine. The physical dependence causes very unpleasant withdrawal symptoms when you try to quit, all while the emotional / mental addiction makes it hard to permanently stay away from nicotine after you quit. Studies have shown that you have to conquer the physical AND emotional / mental side of dependence in order to permanently quit.

Nicotine causes pleasant sensations and distracts the smoker from unpleasant feelings. This makes the smoker want to smoke again. Nicotine also acts as a kind of depressant by interfering with the flow of information between nerve cells. Smokers tend to smoke more cigarettes as the nervous system adapts to nicotine. Over time, the smoker develops a tolerance to nicotine.

When smokers try to cut back or quit, the lack of nicotine leads to withdrawal symptoms both physically and mentally. Nicotine withdrawal symptoms can ultimately lead quitters back to smoking.

Some of the withdrawal symptoms can include anxiety, depression, headaches, feelings of frustration / anger, trouble concentrating, irritability, and sleep disturbances (including having trouble falling asleep and staying asleep).

## SMOKING AND YOUR HEALTH

Health concerns are usually the main reason why people attempt to quit smoking. Studies have shown that smoking harms nearly every organ of the body. In the United States, smoking is responsible for nearly 1 in 5 deaths, and half of all smokers who keep smoking will end up dying from a smoking-related illness.



Smoking greatly increases your risk of getting long-term lung diseases like emphysema, pneumonia and chronic bronchitis. Smoking-related illness can limit your activities by making it harder to breathe, get around, work, or play.

Smokers are twice as likely to die from heart attacks as non-smokers. Smokers put themselves at risk for heart attacks, strokes, and blood vessel diseases. Smoking is a major risk factor for peripheral vascular disease, a narrowing of the blood vessels that carry blood throughout the body. Considering all the diseases that smoking can cause, it can steal your quality of life long before you die.

## PRESCRIPTION DRUGS THAT CAN HELP YOU QUIT

Prescription drugs are also available to help smokers quit. Talk to your doctor if you want to use medicine to help you quit smoking. You will need a prescription for any of these drugs.

Bupropion (brand names are Zyban®, Wellbutrin®, or Aplenzin®) is a prescription anti-depressant in an extended-release form that reduces symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.

It does not contain nicotine. This drug acts on chemicals in the brain that are related to nicotine craving.

Some doctors may recommend combination therapy for heavily addicted smokers, such as using bupropion along with a nicotine patch and/or a short-acting form of nicotine replacement therapy (such as gum or lozenges). Combinations have been found to work better for some people than using any one part alone, but you should only use them together if your doctor is monitoring you.

Varenicline (brand name Chantix®) is a prescription medicine developed to help people stop smoking. It works by interfering with nicotine receptors in the brain. This means it has two effects: it lessens the pleasure a person gets from smoking, and it reduces the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.

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