



The ABCs of Smoking Cessation: From Urges to Ultimate Health

By Dr. Danny Jui, ND

Cigarette smoking is one of the most significant sources of preventable morbidity and mortality worldwide. The media portrayal of the health crisis associated with smoking is a great motivator for many people who choose to quit smoking and move towards a healthier lifestyle. Popular pharmaceutical aids such as nicotine patches, gum, and antidepressant medications are prescribed to help overcome the initial urges and cravings. The cessation rate of using this approach is recorded at around 20-25%. Because of these limited success rates, along with contraindications and side effects, there has been a growing body of evidence supporting the use of naturopathic therapies to facilitate smoking cessation.

A is for Acupuncture. Acupuncture is a form of Traditional Chinese Medicine which involves the insertion of extremely thin needles into appropriate points on the skin to facilitate the body's natural healing response. Acupuncture has been documented as a useful method to reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms, especially during early stages of a smoking cessation program. A recent study found that acupuncture significantly reduced smoking with a cessation rate of 40% which was maintained at 18 months post-treatment. To go over the 40%, additional patient education is recommended along with acupuncture.

B is for Breathing. Breath work is the basis of Mindfulness learning, which is a well-researched form of patient education in smoking cessation. Mindfulness means paying attention in the present moment, non-judgmentally, without commentary or decision-making. The term "urge surfing" has been used to describe this process. It is based on the idea that cravings come in waves, growing stronger and more powerful before cresting and then disappearing. Patients are taught to ride out the waves with a combination of meditation and breathing techniques. A new study published in December 2009 shows that this approach may not initially reduce the urge to smoke but may ultimately change the person's response to these cravings. Another related study reports a cessation rate of almost 60% using such breathing techniques. Practicing breath work in open fresh air may also provide added benefits of stress reduction and reversing tissue damage associated with previous smoking.

C is for Vitamin C. Vitamin C is one of the most powerful antioxidants used in clinical nutrition to reverse and prevent any tissue damage associated with smoking or oxidative stress. It has an effect on nicotine metabolism, cancer prevention, and immune system regulation. An interesting study conducted by Duke University found that a vitamin C spray to the back of the throat can serve as an effective sensory substitute for smoking cravings. In addition to its local sensory effect, vitamin C goes beyond the urges and facilitates the body's recovery towards ultimate

health. Larger doses may be recommended intravenously as part of a complete smoking cessation program.

Quitting smoking is your first (big) step to ultimate preventive health. In addition to acupuncture, breathing techniques, and vitamin C therapy, there are other natural ways to help you achieve your goal. Every resolution comes with commitment, compassion, and self-discovery. Work with your naturopathic doctor to determine the most appropriate interventions for your situation.

Dr. Danny Jui is a licensed naturopathic physician with additional certifications in acupuncture and Integrative Medicine. He is the first Canadian naturopathic doctor to complete the residency in Evidence-Based Integrative Medicine at Yale University. Dr. Jui is the co-founder of Ray Clinic located in Port Moody, BC. More information about Ray Clinic can be found at www.rayclinic.ca. To schedule a consultation with Dr. Jui, please email info@rayclinic.ca or call 604.461.7900.

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