

Dairy, Fruits and Veggies May Help Smokers Quit

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Milk does the body good -- and may help smokers break the habit, say researchers at Duke University Medical Center.

Smokers reported that consuming milk, water, fruits and vegetables worsened the taste of cigarettes, while consuming alcohol, coffee and meat enhanced their taste, according to the scientists.

The findings could lead to a "Quit Smoking Diet" or to development of a gum or lozenge that makes cigarettes less palatable, said lead study investigator Joseph McClernon, Ph.D., an assistant research professor of medical psychiatry at the Duke Center for Nicotine and Smoking Cessation Research.

"With a few modifications to their diet -- consuming items that make cigarettes taste bad, such as a cold glass of milk, and avoiding items that make cigarettes taste good, like a pint of beer -- smokers can make quitting a bit easier," McClernon said.

The findings appear in the April 2007 issue of the journal *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*. The research was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

In what the researchers say is the first study to explore the taste-altering effects of food and beverages on cigarette palatability, they asked 209 smokers to name items that worsen or enhance the taste of cigarettes.

Nineteen percent of them reported that dairy products, such as milk or cheese, worsen the taste of cigarettes; 14 percent reported noncaffeinated beverages, such as water or juice; and 16 percent reported fruits and vegetables.

Forty-four percent of them reported that alcoholic beverages enhance the taste of cigarettes; 45 percent reported caffeinated beverages, such as tea, cola and coffee; and 11 percent reported meat.

Smokers of menthol cigarettes were less likely to report that any foods or beverages altered the taste of cigarettes, a finding that suggests menthol covers up bad tastes stemming from items consumed with cigarettes, the researchers said.

Identifying which components of foods and beverages ruin the taste of cigarettes could lead to new treatments to deter smoking, said study co-investigator Jed E. Rose, Ph.D., director of the Duke center.

The researchers are now looking at the possibility of using the chemical silver acetate, which is known to alter the taste of cigarettes, to help smokers quit. The additive could be given in the form of a gum or a lozenge as part of smoking cessation treatment.

"Every deterrent treatment requires willpower," Rose said. "This approach alone will not work. It may make cigarettes less pleasurable, but ultimately, if a person is craving a cigarette, he will start smoking again."

Rose recommends that diet modifications be used in combination with standard nicotine replacement therapy, such as the nicotine patch and nicotine gum, to help with withdrawal.

Other researchers participating in the study were Eric C. Westman and

Avery M. Lutz.

Source: Duke University Medical Center

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