

Breaking the smoking-drinking connection

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(HealthDay)—Smoking and drinking often go hand-in-hand, stimulating pleasure centers in the brain. But there's even more to this unhealthy relationship than meets the eye.

Researchers have found that nicotine in cigarettes cancels out the sleepiness caused by alcohol, basically allowing people to keep drinking ... and [smoking](#). The two vices feed off of each other.

It takes time for your [brain](#) to stop associating the two activities. So when you decide to quit smoking, it will help to take a break from [drinking](#), too, at least during the first few weeks. If not, your brain will send out a signal prompting you to reach for a cigarette every time you have a drink. Try chewing gum or having a sugar-free candy instead.

When you do decide to indulge in a drink, shake up your routine. Have a different alcoholic beverage than your usual, use your non-dominant hand to hold the glass, and cut back on consumption with alternate drinks of glasses of water.

Alcohol aside, some people experience stronger effects from caffeine when they quit smoking. Though it's hard to give up that morning coffee, try cutting back if you find yourself feeling a little shaky. Follow up that first cup of coffee with decaf or caffeine-free tea.

Keep in mind that cravings most often happen in situations that you normally associate with smoking, so the more you can change these daily rituals, the easier quitting will be.

Yes, that could mean skipping happy hour at your favorite watering hole. But if you replace at least some of those habits with healthier ones, like walking after work or even going to an evening fitness class, you'll double the benefits of quitting smoking.

More information: The American Lung Association has [great tips](#) to help you resist lighting up.

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