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The number of female smokers has increased considerably over the last decade
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Women Need More Help to Quit Smoking Than Men

More emotional vulnerability is the underlying cause

Researchers at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, say that women can quit smoking just as easily as men, but that they require a different kind of support than men do in order to succeed. Though the scientists have found no relevant differences between the numbers of men and women that managed to stay free of smoking about half a year after they quit, they also argue that counseling and smoking prevention should be tailored to and customized for each particular individual, for optimum results.

From a psychological perspective, Mayo research program coordinator, Dr. Ivana T. Croghan, says that women deal with more irritability, depression, anxiety, and lethargy than most men do, and that these feelings are the ones that often make them pick up smoking again or, at least, make them feel like they want to have just one cigarette. Intense emotions are also most likely to trigger the urge for a smoke, considering that most women associate cigarettes with a certain moment of the day, or with a certain action.

"The problem is that there are specialists or interventionists who deal with everyone in the same manner. Treatment specialists can actually adjust the behavioral intervention to fit those kinds of issues to help her move along," Croghan told Reuters in an interview. She added that women generally had less faith in their own ability to quit the damaging habit than men, and that this aspect contributed to their hard experience. Withdrawal symptoms also manifest harder than in men, which can be a further cause to pick up smoking again.

While nicotine patches that are readily available in most pharmacies are a good way to replace cigarettes, scientists say that they shouldn't be used on their own, but, rather, in conjuncture with specialized advice, coming from a trained physician. Otherwise, chances of people taking up smoking again are fairly large.

"I would encourage people who do want to use over-the-counter pharmaceutical aids to at least get some kind of counseling in there, whether it's a tobacco quit line, a self-help manual, or just going to a physician to talk," the researcher explained.