



# TOBACCO CESSATION TOOLKIT

Resources for healthcare professionals



## Hooked on Nicotine Checklist (HONC)

The HONC checklist is another way to assess dependence among adolescents and can be seen as an early warning regarding developing dependence

### Questions

- 1) Have you ever tried to quit, but couldn't?  Yes  No
- 2) Do you smoke now because it is really hard to quit?  Yes  No
- 3) Have you ever felt like you were addicted to tobacco?  Yes  No
- 4) Do you ever have strong cravings to smoke?  Yes  No
- 5) Have you ever felt like you really needed a cigarette?  Yes  No
- 6) Is it hard to keep from smoking in places where you are not supposed to, like school?  Yes  No

### When you tried to stop smoking...(OR, when you haven't used tobacco for a while...)

- 7) Did you find it hard to concentrate because you couldn't smoke?  Yes  No
- 8) Did you feel more irritable because you couldn't smoke?  Yes  No
- 9) Did you feel a strong need or urge to smoke?  Yes  No
- 10) Did you feel nervous, restless or anxious because you couldn't smoke?  Yes  No

The HONC is scored by counting the number of YES responses. Smokers who have scores above zero can be told that they are already hooked. Many youths become hooked before they even consider themselves to be smokers. This is because the loss of autonomy can start after the first few cigarettes.

*Developed by the  
Children's Hospital at Westmead*

Page 1 of 2



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## **How are Individual HONC Items Interpreted?**

Because each of the 10 symptoms measured by the HONC has face validity as an indicator of diminished autonomy, a smoker has lost full autonomy if any symptom is endorsed.

## **Have you ever tried to quit, but couldn't?**

A failed cessation attempt is an obvious indication of diminished autonomy. It doesn't matter how hard or how sincerely the person tried to quit. The key is the desire to quit. If quitting took no effort, the person would no longer be smoking.

## **Do you smoke now because it is really hard to quit?**

The same rationale applies here. This item is included to capture those who do not want to smoke, but have not made an "official" effort to quit, often out of a fear of failure. Since they are doing something they don't want to, they have diminished autonomy.

## **Have you ever felt like you were addicted to tobacco?**

A person who has full autonomy over his or her use of tobacco does not feel addicted. The HONC is not asking people to self-diagnose addiction.

## **Do you ever have strong cravings to smoke?**

Strong cravings make quitting difficult and unpleasant.

## **Have you ever felt like you really needed a cigarette?**

Smokers feel they really need a cigarette because of cravings, withdrawal symptoms, or psychological dependence. Whatever the reason, quitting becomes more difficult.

## **Is it hard to keep from smoking in places where you are not supposed to?**

An autonomous smoker would have no difficulty refraining from smoking, especially where it is forbidden.

## **When you haven't used tobacco for a while ... OR When you tried to stop smoking ...**

did you find it hard to concentrate because you couldn't smoke?

did you feel more irritable because you couldn't smoke?

did you feel a strong need or urge to smoke?

did you feel nervous, restless or anxious because you couldn't smoke?

Withdrawal symptoms make quitting unpleasant and more difficult.