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## Zap that smoking habit

### Laser treatment joins therapies available for snuffing out nicotine cravings

By **Peggy O'Farrell**  
Enquirer staff writer

Jeff Price tried the patch, the gum and sheer willpower: None kept him off cigarettes for the long haul.

So Price decided to give the latest high-tech weapon against nicotine a try: The laser.

The suburban Atlanta man was one of the first in the country to try cold laser therapy to help him kick the habit. Price, 42, took his first laser treatment in January. After a "booster" session, he says, he doesn't miss cigarettes at all.

Targeting certain "energy points" in the body with a cold laser helps fight nicotine cravings, says Ted Wade, who runs the Anne Penman Stop Smoking Center in Springdale. The center, which opened in May, is part of a national franchise based in Atlanta, where Price got his therapy.

As Cincinnati and other communities debate banning smoking in the workplace and other public spaces, more Tristaters may start looking for help to beat the tobacco habit.



### It's not easy

Price knew he had to stop smoking: His blood pressure was too high. He felt sluggish. He had trouble catching his breath. His father, a heavy smoker, died of heart disease at 47. His brother, also a longtime smoker, had suffered a heart attack at 43.

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But it's not easy to break a 25-year habit. Price had been trying to quit for about five years when he heard about laser therapy.

"It was the newest thing out there, so I thought I'd try it," Price says. "I'd already tried and failed everything else."

Kim Wade, a laser technician at the Springdale center, explains the procedure like this: A cold laser pulses low levels of energy at more than 20 points on the hands, nose, ears and wrists. Each point is targeted for 60 seconds, and the procedure is painless.

Those points correspond to energy centers used in acupuncture and acupressure to ease cravings and elevate mood, she says.

In addition to the laser, clients also receive supportive counseling. Included are ideas on what to do instead of having a cigarette when a craving strikes, and stress management and relaxation techniques.

Cost for the laser treatment is \$269. It includes the initial session and three "booster" sessions. There's a toll-free support line clients can call 24 hours a day, and center staff follow up with clients for a year after their initial session.

Although experts say more research is needed to determine whether the cold lasers will provide favorable results for smokers who want to quit, other laser treatments have shown promise. A Michigan State University study that used lasers on auto workers with carpal tunnel syndrome showed favorable results in 70 percent of patients. The Food and Drug Administration gave approval in February 2002 for several manufacturers to begin distribution of the laser.

## One of several options

Smokers who want to be ex-smokers have other options: Nicotine patches, gum and inhalers and hypnotherapy are among the best-known. Some people also use prescription drugs such as Zyban to fight cravings and mood swings while they're trying to quit.

Research has shown that medication combined with counseling is the most successful option, says Dr. Robert Anthenelli, director of the Tristate Tobacco and Alcohol Research Center at the University of Cincinnati and the Cincinnati VA Medical Center.

Many smokers trying to quit probably just go cold turkey - but not many succeed, Anthenelli says. Nicotine and other substances in cigarette smoke are physically addictive, he says, and the odds of succeeding without assistance are less than

### YEARS OF BENEFITS

The body starts repairing damage caused by smoking minutes after that last cigarette is put out:

- After 20 minutes: Blood pressure decreases, the pulse rate drops and body temperature in the hands and feet begins increasing to normal.
- After eight hours: The carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal and the blood oxygen level increases to normal.

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1 in 20.

"It is extremely difficult and really ill-advised in 2004 to try to quit cold turkey," he says. Most smokers try to quit several times before they succeed for the long term.

More traditional approaches to kicking the habit include:

- Hypnotherapy. The American Lung Association ([www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org) or 985-3990 for the local branch) and many private practitioners offer hypnosis to help smokers trying to quit break the psychological addiction. Positive messages of support are used. Sessions can also be tailored to help fight weight gain that might occur after quitting.

- Nicotine replacement. Patches and gum containing nicotine are available over-the-counter, and an inhaler is available by prescription. The products let smokers "taper off" their nicotine intake while they give up tobacco.

- Counseling and support groups. The American Lung Association offers the Freedom from Smoking program, and Addiction Management Systems Inc., based in Dallas and Toronto, recently launched an online smoking control program at [www.smokingcontrolsystems.com](http://www.smokingcontrolsystems.com).

- After 24 hours: The chance of a heart attack decreases.

- After 48 hours: Nerve endings begin regrowth and the ability to smell and taste is enhanced.

- After two weeks to three months: Circulation improves, walking becomes easier and lung function increases.

- After one to nine months: Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue and shortness of breath decrease.

- After one year: The excess risk of coronary heart disease drops to half that of a smoker.

- After five to 15 years: Stroke risk drops to that of people who have never smoked.

- After 10 years: The risk of lung cancer drops to as little as half that of continuing smokers; the risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidneys and pancreas decreases; the risk of ulcers decreases.

- After 15 years: The risk of coronary disease is similar to that of people who have never smoked, and the risk of death returns to nearly the level of people who have never smoked.

**Source: The American Lung Association**

## Nicotine-free resources

Need help quitting? You're not alone. Here are some resources:

**The American Lung Association** ([www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)) ; The American Cancer Society ([www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)) . These sites also offer help and support: [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov), [www.quitnet.com](http://www.quitnet.com) and [www.smokehelp.org](http://www.smokehelp.org).

**For hypnotherapy**, look in the Yellow Pages under hypnotherapists or hypnotists.

**For information** on the Anne Penman Stop Smoking Center, call 772-9355 or visit [www.annepenmanlasertherapy.com](http://www.annepenmanlasertherapy.com).

**To learn about local drug trials** researching new smoking cessation methods, call the Tristate Tobacco and Alcohol Research Center, 475-6446.

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E-mail [pofarrell@enquirer.com](mailto:pofarrell@enquirer.com)

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