

Cost of Living Cost of Smoking: Evidence Brief 1

Is hypnosis effective for smoking cessation?



What is hypnosis / hypnotherapy?

Hypnotherapy (or hypnosis; these terms are used interchangeably) is claimed to act on underlying impulses to smoke by weakening those impulses, strengthening the will to stop, or improving the ability to focus on treatment. Hypnotherapy techniques include changing patients' perceptions of smoking by instructing the smoker that:

- a. Smoking is a poison.
- b. The body should be protected from smoke.
- a. There are advantages to life as a non-smoker.

There is an option to train in self-hypnosis as well as receive hypnosis by a therapist.

Source: Barnes et al. (2019): [Hypnotherapy for smoking cessation - Barnes, J - 2019 | Cochrane Library](#)

Briefly

Hypnotherapy has been found to i) be more effective than NRT in improving smoking abstinence in patients hospitalised for a smoking-related illness (Hasan et al., 2014); ii) have a therapeutic effectiveness in achieving a high rate of smoking cessation among secondary school students (Mohamed & El-Mwafie, 2015); iii) increase the success of smoking cessation in active adult smokers (Fauziyyah, Prasetya & Murti, 2022); and iv) be more effective than NRT but not as or more effective than relaxation therapy (Andrean & Makful, 2022).

On the other hand, a Cochrane review found that there is insufficient evidence to determine whether hypnotherapy is more effective for smoking cessation than other forms of behavioural support or unassisted quitting, and that if a benefit is present, it is small at most (Barnes et al., 2019). Other studies found that a single session of group hypnotherapy does not appear to be more effective for smoking cessation than a group relaxation session (Dickson-Spillmann, Haug,

& Schaub, 2013). In addition, there was no difference when using hypnotherapy for smoking cessation compared to alternative methods, such as NRT (Luciano, 2016), behavioural counselling (Carmody et al., 2017) or psychoeducation (Munson, Barabasz & Barabasz, 2018).

Evidence for hypnotherapy (in more detail)

- Hasan et al. (2014)¹ conducted a randomised control trial comparing the efficacy of hypnotherapy alone, as well as hypnotherapy with nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and conventional NRT in patients hospitalised with cardiac or pulmonary illness (146 participants). Hypnotherapy was found to be more effective than NRT in improving smoking abstinence in patients hospitalised for a smoking-related illness at 26-weeks post-discharge.
- Mohamed and El-Mwafie (2015)² examined the effectiveness of hypnotherapy on smoking cessation

among secondary school students (59 male participants). The study found that hypnotherapy has a therapeutic effectiveness in achieving a high rate of smoking cessation among secondary school students.

- Fauziyyah, Prasetya and Murti (2022)³ conducted a meta-analysis (9 studies, 966 participants in total) exploring the effect of hypnotherapy on the success of smoking cessation in active smokers and found that hypnotherapy indeed increases the success of smoking cessation in active adult smokers.
- Andrean and Makful (2022)⁴ also conducted a systematic review (4 studies, 496 participants) examining hypnotherapy as a smoking cessation intervention. Researchers found that hypnotherapy is more effective than NRT but not as or more effective than relaxation method (note: authors do not define what they mean by relaxation method).





Evidence against hypnotherapy (in more detail)

- Barnes and colleagues (2019)⁵ conducted a Cochrane systematic review of 14 studies (total of 1926 participants) to evaluate the effect of hypnotherapy from smoking cessation. The authors concluded that there is insufficient evidence to determine whether hypnotherapy is more effective for smoking cessation than other forms of behavioural support or unassisted quitting. If a benefit is present, current evidence suggests the benefit is small at most.
- Dickson-Spillmann, Haug and Schaub (2013)⁶ investigated the efficacy of a single session of group hypnotherapy for smoking cessation compared to relaxation⁷ in Swiss adult smokers (randomised controlled trial; 223 participants). Researchers found that a single session of group hypnotherapy does not appear to be more effective for smoking cessation than a group relaxation session.
- Luciano (2016)⁸ conducted a systematic review (3 studies, 430 participants) to determine whether hypnotherapy is an effective treatment in smoking cessation compared to alternative methods (i.e., NRT, relaxation therapy and single vs group hypnotherapy). Based on the findings, there was no difference when using hypnotherapy for smoking cessation compared with alternative methods.
- Carmody et al. (2017)⁹ conducted a randomised controlled smoking cessation trial to determine whether hypnosis would be more effective than standard behavioural counselling in helping smokers to remain abstinent. Participants were 140 current smokers. Researchers found that quit rates for hypnosis and behavioural counselling did not differ.
- Munson, Barabasz and Barabasz (2018)¹⁰ conducted a study investigating the effectiveness of hypnosis for smoking cessation compared to a control condition of psychoeducation¹¹ (30 participants in total) and found no differences between the two groups.

¹ [Hypnotherapy is more effective than nicotine replacement therapy for smoking cessation: Results of a randomized controlled trial - ScienceDirect](#)

² [document \(psu.edu\)](#)

³ [Meta-Analysis: Hypnotherapy and Its Effect on Quitting Smoking Behavior | Journal of Health Promotion and Behavior \(thejhp.com\)](#)

⁴ [Hypnotherapy as a method of smoking cessation: a systematic review | BKM Public Health and Community Medicine \(ugm.ac.id\)](#)

⁵ [Hypnotherapy for smoking cessation - Barnes, J - 2019 | Cochrane Library](#)

⁶ [Group hypnosis vs. relaxation for smoking cessation in adults: a cluster-randomised controlled trial | SpringerLink](#)

⁷ In the relaxation condition, the participants were initially invited to make themselves comfortable and to relax. No repetitive statements were made, and no anchors were used to reinforce and deepen relaxation. The participants were asked to listen to the music for ten minutes before the same suggestive sentences as used in the hypnosis group were given.

⁸ ["Is Hypnotherapy an Effective Treatment in Smoking Cessation In Compari" by Dana Luciano \(pcom.edu\)](#)

⁹ [Full article: Hypnosis for Smoking Relapse Prevention: A Randomized Trial \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

¹⁰ [Full article: Ability of Hypnosis to Facilitate Movement Through Stages of Change for Smoking Cessation \(tandfonline.com\)](#)

¹¹ This condition highlighted the dangers of smoking, particularly the negative health consequences caused by smoking.

