

Mobile App Supports Smoking Cessation Among Latinos

The app, Impacto, helps users overcome the physical and emotional side effects associated with smoking cessation.

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University of Houston researchers found that a culturally sensitive mobile app was successful in helping Latino smokers quit in a pilot study, according to a [university news release](#).

[Cigarette smoking](#) is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States. More than 28 million U.S. adults [smoke](#) cigarettes and nearly 500,000 Americans die of smoking-related causes each year, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC).

Although most adults who smoke report that they want to quit, [only 31% of those interested in quitting](#) receive counseling and/or medications, and less than 8% kick the habit each year.

About 1 in 13 (7.7%) Latino adults in the United States smoke cigarettes. Creators of the app, titled Impacto, note that Latinos who smoke face greater challenges in quitting and a higher risk of smoking-related health problems, such as [stroke](#), [heart disease](#) and [diabetes](#).

“These disparities are driven by factors like limited [access to treatment](#) and [chronic stress](#) from experiences such as racial and ethnic discrimination, making it even harder to quit smoking and overcome its harmful effects,” said app co-creator Michael Zvolensky, PhD, in the release.

Impacto helps Latinos quit smoking by acknowledging and addressing the stress and anxiety that can make quitting difficult. The app teaches and encourages users to partake in [regular exercise](#) to reduce the physical symptoms and negative emotions associated with quitting smoking.

[Published in the Journal of Substance Abuse & Addiction Treatment](#), results of the pilot study show that the app helps decrease daily smoking rates and improves smoking cessation.

The study involved 30 Latino smokers who smoked about 15 cigarettes per day for 15 years or more. On average, participants were 31 years old.

For eight weeks, the app guides users through four lessons per week. Users learn about simple interoceptive exercises that focus on body awareness, such as spinning in a chair, doing jumping jacks or breathing fast, to help them become familiar with sensations like a racing heartbeat, which can help reduce anxiety.

“Participants practice the interoceptive exercises daily and prior to their quit attempt,” said Zvolensky. “These exercises decrease emotional responsivity to bodily and emotional stress and make quitting easier. They must do it before quitting, much like a runner would have to practice running increasingly longer to eventually run a marathon.”

Participants quit smoking at the end of week 4. According to researchers, Impacto helped over half of participants (65.4%) remain smoke-free for an additional four weeks post-quit.

“Moreover, rates of cigarettes smoked per day and anxiety sensitivity levels significantly decreased from baseline through four weeks post-quit. High rates of feasibility, acceptability and engagement were also observed,” he said.

To read more, click [#Smoking](#). There, you’ll find headlines such as “[Prevention and Screening Drive Drop in Cancer Deaths](#),” “[Want to Quit Smoking? Here’s New Support and Guidelines](#)” and “[NIH and FDA Leaders Call for Innovation in Development of Smoking Cessation Treatments](#).”