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'Smokers can curb cravings by training their brains'

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'Smokers can curb cravings by training their brains'

Washington: Want to kick the butt? You can do it by training your brain, scientists claim.

Researchers at Yale University found that smokers can control their cravings for cigarettes by tamping down emotion and thinking logically about the long-term consequences of the habit. Using a technique called functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), the researchers watched the brains of smokers as they were shown images of cigarettes and food.

When the smokers tried to resist cravings for their objects of desire, parts of their brain linked with control of emotion lit up with activity, while craving-related areas quieted. "This shows smokers can indeed control their cravings, they just need to be told how to do it," lead researcher Hedy Kober of the Yale School of Medicine was quoted as saying by LiveScience.

The researchers asked 21 smokers to try resisting their cravings triggered by the images of cigarettes. The smokers were told to think of the long-term negative consequences of giving in. As they successfully resisted their cravings, the smokers' emotional regulation areas in the prefrontal cortex showed in-



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BREAKING THE HABIT IS ALL IN THE MIND

creased blood flow, indicating greater activity

"We saw that there's this pathway," said Kevin Ochsner, a psychologist at Columbia University and co-author of the study. "The frontal lobe comes on, the striatum goes off, and then craving goes off." PTI