

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

(Help to stop smoking)

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products provide nicotine to reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms that many people experience when they try to stop smoking. Using NRT can increase the chances of successfully quitting. A pharmacist can advise on safe and effective use of NRT.

Quitting

The nicotine in tobacco is very addictive and makes people want to smoke. Continual exposure to the many chemicals in tobacco smoke can then cause heart disease, emphysema, lung cancer, bronchitis and many other health problems.

When you quit smoking, your body can still crave nicotine, which creates an urge to smoke. You may also suffer other nicotine withdrawal effects (e.g. irritability, anxiety, loss of concentration, hunger and sleepless nights). NRT replaces cigarettes as your source of nicotine in order to reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms, while you focus on breaking smoking habits.

If you are addicted to smoking, the correct use of NRT can double your



chances of quitting successfully. However, NRT may not completely remove the desire to smoke and only people determined to quit will succeed.

Benefits of NRT

- NRT products do not contain all the poisonous chemicals and gases that are found in cigarettes and cigarette smoke.
- NRT reduces nicotine withdrawal symptoms and helps you resist the urge to smoke.
- NRT allows you to gradually reduce your dose of nicotine.
- Side effects of NRT are usually mild. Some people experience skin rashes (patches); sore mouth and throat (gum, lozenge, sublingual tablet, inhaler); nausea; dizziness or vivid dreams.

NRT products

Nicotine skin patches – slowly release a steady amount of nicotine through the skin into the body over either 16 or 24 hours. Patches containing different amounts of nicotine are available, so that you can gradually reduce your nicotine dose.

Nicotine lozenges – lozenges release nicotine as they dissolve in the mouth. They should not be chewed or swallowed. Larger lozenges take about 30 minutes to dissolve and mini lozenges take about 10 minutes to dissolve. Lozenges containing different amounts of nicotine are available.

The amount of nicotine in the lozenges and frequency of use lets you control your daily nicotine dose.

Nicotine sublingual tablets – tablets release nicotine as they dissolve under the tongue over about 30 minutes. They should not be chewed or swallowed. Frequency of use lets you control your daily nicotine dose.

Nicotine chewing gum – chewing the gum releases nicotine. Gums containing different amounts of nicotine are available. The amount of nicotine in the gum, frequency of use and a special chewing technique let you control your daily nicotine dose. Gum is not suitable for people with dentures.

Nicotine inhaler – a plastic cylinder containing a cartridge that releases nicotine when you inhale it. The inhaler delivers nicotine into the mouth, not the lungs. Frequency of use lets you control your daily nicotine dose.

Ways to quit smoking using NRT include:

- Stop smoking abruptly, using one form of NRT to reduce nicotine withdrawal effects
- Stop smoking abruptly, using a combination of nicotine patches and one of the oral (quick acting) forms of NRT to reduce nicotine withdrawal effects
- Stop smoking gradually, using one form of NRT to help reduce the number of cigarettes smoked. For

example, people who smoke more than 15 cigarettes per day and want to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoke while preparing to quit, can apply a nicotine patch for two weeks before their quit date.

NRT products can be purchased without a prescription and a pharmacist can advise on their use. *Step one* NRT patches (the highest dose patches) may also be prescribed by a doctor so that the cost can be subsidised by the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Tell your doctor and pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines or have any chronic health conditions (e.g. heart disease).

Self care

Do not give up on a plan to quit – you can stop and it is never too late to benefit.

- When using NRT, read and follow the instructions. Use enough to ease cravings and other withdrawal symptoms.
- Your quitting success rate may improve if you avoid situations which tempt you to smoke (e.g. being with others who are smoking, stressful or frustrating situations, drinking alcohol, coffee breaks).
- Quitting smoking often involves overcoming emotional and psychological dependence on smoking as well as overcoming the physical addiction to nicotine. Counselling and support programs can increase your

Important

Talk with a doctor or pharmacist about ways to quit.

- Switching to lower nicotine or lower tar (mild or light) cigarettes or another form of tobacco will not help you quit.
- Consult with your doctor before using NRT if you are pregnant, breastfeeding or have had recent or severe heart or circulation problems.
- Store and dispose of NRT products carefully and keep out of reach of children.

chances of quitting. Support kits and programs are offered by the 'Quit' program and by some manufacturers of NRT products. Some people benefit from joining a support group.

- Eat regular, healthy meals, including plenty of fruit, vegetables and grain foods. Limit foods high in fat, sugar or salt.
- Exercise at a moderate level for at least 30 minutes on all or most days of the week.
- Drink enough water every day to satisfy your thirst and to keep your urine 'light-coloured' (unless a doctor advises not to).
- Limit alcohol.

For more information

The Quitline

Phone: 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for information, support and a free Quit Pack.

Quit web sites:

www.quitnow.info.au

www.quitcoach.org.au

www.quitbecauseyoucan.org.au

www.quit.org.au

www.quitsa.org.au

www.quittas.org.au

www.actcancer.org

www.icanquit.com.au

www.health.qld.gov.au/quitsmoking

Healthdirect Australia

Phone: 1800 022 222

Website: www.healthinsite.gov.au

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)

Your pharmacist can advise on CMI leaflets.

National Prescribing Service (NPS) Medicines Information

Phone: 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)

Website: www.nps.org.au

The Poisons Information Centre

In case of poisoning phone 13 11 26 from anywhere in Australia.

*Pharmacists are medicines experts.
Ask a pharmacist for advice when
choosing a medicine.*

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