

Nicotine Replacement Fact Sheet

Dealing with nicotine addiction is an important part of quitting smoking. Nicotine replacement products are designed to relieve some of the withdrawal symptoms people experience when they quit smoking.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a variety of different medicines to help you quit smoking. You should ask your doctor about them. Some are available over the counter, and others are available only with a prescription from your doctor. These products come in the different forms described below. To give you the best chance of quitting successfully, these products should be used with a behavior change program designed to help you kick the habit.

1. Over-the-Counter Products

Nicotine Patch (and also by prescription):

How it works: The transdermal nicotine patch releases a constant amount of nicotine in the body. However, unlike a cigarette, it may take a few hours for the nicotine in the patch to pass through the skin and reach the user's bloodstream. The patches are similar to adhesive bandages and are available in different shapes and sizes. A larger patch delivers more nicotine through the skin.

How it is used: The patch must be worn all day, and cannot be put on and removed as a substitute for a cigarette. Most of the patch products are changed once every 24 hours. One type of patch is worn only during the waking hours and is removed during sleep.

Side effects: Some side effects from wearing the nicotine patch may include:

- Skin irritation
- Dizziness
- Racing heartbeat
- Sleep problems
- Headache
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Muscle aches
- Stiffness

Nicotine Gum:

How it works: Nicotine gum delivers nicotine to the brain more quickly than the patch. But unlike smoke, which passes quickly into the blood through the lining of the lung, the nicotine in the gum

takes several minutes to reach the brain. This makes the “hit” less intense with the gum than with a cigarette.

How it is used: Nicotine gum is not designed to be chewed like normal gum. It is used in the “chew and park” method. When you put a piece of gum in your mouth, chew it a few times to break it down, then park it between your gum and cheek and leave it there. If you continue chewing without parking, the nicotine will be released directly into your saliva and swallowed, which may cause an upset stomach.

To get the most out of nicotine gum therapy:

- Avoid eating or drinking for 15 minutes before or while chewing the gum
- Chew the gum slowly on and off for 30 minutes to release most of the nicotine
- Chew enough gum to reduce withdrawal symptoms (10-15 pieces a day, but no more than 20 pieces a day)
- Use the gum every day for one to three months and then start to reduce the number of pieces you chew a day
- Stop using the gum after six months

Side effects: During the first few days of using nicotine gum you may have the following side effects:

- Mouth sores
- Jaw muscle aches
- Increased saliva
- Indigestion
- Headache

These effects should disappear as use of the gum is continued. If the gum sticks to your dental work, stop using it and check with your healthcare provider or dentist.

Nicotine Lozenge:

How it works: The nicotine lozenge is like a hard candy, and releases nicotine as it slowly dissolves in the mouth. You use fewer and fewer lozenges during the 12-week program until you are nicotine free. Each lozenge will last about 20-30 minutes.

How it is used: One lozenge is one dose. The maximum dosage should not exceed 20 lozenges per day. Biting or chewing the lozenge will cause more nicotine to be swallowed quickly and result in indigestion and/or heartburn. Do not eat or drink 15 minutes before using the lozenge. Or while

it is in your mouth. Do not use nicotine lozenges for longer than 12 weeks. If you feel the need to continue using the lozenges after 12 weeks, contact your healthcare provider.

Side effects: The most common side effects of lozenge use are:

- Soreness of the teeth and gums
- Indigestion
- Throat irritation

2. Prescription Medicines

Nicotine Nasal Spray:

How it works: The nicotine nasal spray comes in a pump bottle similar to over-the-counter decongestant sprays. The nicotine is quickly absorbed through the nasal membranes and reaches the bloodstream faster than with any other nicotine replacement product. This rapid nicotine “hit” may make the nasal spray attractive to some highly dependent smokers.

How it is used: A usual single dose is two sprays, one in each nostril. The maximum recommended dose is 5 doses per hour or 40 doses total per day.

Side effects: The most common side effects due to the nasal spray are nose and throat irritations.

Nicotine Inhaler:

How it works: The nicotine inhaler consists of a plastic tube containing a cartridge that delivers nicotine when you puff on it. Use the inhaler when you have a craving for a cigarette. Although it looks similar to a cigarette, the nicotine from the inhaler enters the mouth, not the lung. It enters the body much more slowly than the nicotine in cigarettes.

How it is used: Each cartridge delivers up to 300 puffs of nicotine vapor (the equivalent of two cigarettes is absorbed into the bloodstream). The best effect is achieved by frequent, continuous puffing for 20 minutes. The maximum suggested dose is 16 cartridges per day.

Side effects: Side effects of the nicotine inhaler include irritation of the throat and mouth in the beginning. You may also start to cough, but you should get over this after a while. If not, make sure to consult with your doctor.

Non-Nicotine Tablets:

How it works: There are two non-nicotine tablets available by prescription. They are different medicines and they work differently to help the user quit smoking. One is a once-a-day tablet that is taken for 7 to 12 weeks. The other is a twice-a-day tablet that is taken for 12 weeks (renewable for up to 12 weeks more).

How it is used: Both medicines are begun one week before you quit to allow the medicine to build up in your system.

Side effects: Both medicines have side effects. Ask your doctor to tell you about the benefits and side effects of these and other medicines you are considering.

If you and your doctor choose to use any of these products to help you quit smoking, it is important to take them only as directed.

Studies suggest that almost anyone can quit smoking. The goal in using nicotine replacement therapy is to stop smoking completely. If you continue to have strong urges to smoke or are struggling to stop smoking completely, your healthcare provider is there to give you the added help you need.