



# Nicotine Replacement Therapy

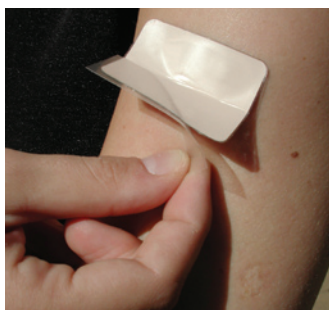
## (Help to stop smoking)

**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 addictive and makes people want to smoke. Continual exposure to the many chemicals in tobacco smoke can then cause heart disease, 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, loss of concentration, hunger and sleepless nights). NRT replaces cigarettes as your source of nicotine in order to control nicotine withdrawal symptoms, while you focus on breaking smoking habits. You can then slowly wean off the NRT.



NRT is of the most help to people who smoke more than 10 cigarettes per day. People who use NRT are almost twice as likely to stay quit as those who try to use will power alone. However, NRT does not completely remove the desire to smoke and only those committed to quitting will succeed.

### Benefits of NRT

- NRT products do not contain all the poisonous chemicals and gases that are found in cigarettes.
- Less nicotine is absorbed into the body than with cigarettes.
- NRT reduces nicotine withdrawal symptoms and helps 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, s/l tablet, inhaler); nausea; dizziness or vivid dreams.

### Important

Talk with a doctor or pharmacist about ways to quit.

- Switching to lower nicotine and tar cigarettes will not help you quit.
- Consult with your doctor before using NRT if you are pregnant or you have had recent or severe heart or circulatory problems.
- Store and dispose of NRT products carefully and keep out of reach of children.

### NRT products

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

**Nicotine lozenges** – lozenge dissolves in the mouth, releasing nicotine over about 20 minutes. The nicotine is absorbed from the mouth. Frequency of use determines daily nicotine dose.

**Nicotine sublingual tablets** – tablet dissolves under the tongue, releasing nicotine over about 30 minutes. The nicotine is absorbed from the mouth. May be used discreetly and frequency of use determines daily nicotine dose.

**Nicotine chewing gum** – chewing the gum releases nicotine which is absorbed from the mouth. Both frequency of use and a special chewing technique allow user to determine 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 determines 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 gum to reduce nicotine withdrawal effects
- Stop smoking gradually, using nicotine gum or inhalers to help cut down then stop cigarettes.

NRT products can be purchased without a prescription and a pharmacist can advise on their use. Tell your 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 and 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 involves more than overcoming the physical addiction to nicotine and some people benefit from joining a support group. Support kits and programs are offered by the 'Quit' program and by some manufacturers of NRT products.

Your **Self Care** Pharmacist

- Eat regular, healthy meals, including fruit, vegetables and grains. Limit foods high in fat, sugar or salt.
- Exercise regularly – the Heart Foundation recommends at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise on all or most days of the week.
- Drink at least two litres (eight glasses) of water daily (unless a doctor advises not to).
- Limit alcohol.

## Related Fact Cards

- *Smoking*
- *Staying a Non-Smoker*

## For more information

**The Quitline** – phone 13 7848 (13 QUIT) for information and a free Quit Pack.

Quit web sites:

[www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au)  
[www.quitcoach.org.au](http://www.quitcoach.org.au)  
[www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au)  
[www.quitsa.org.au](http://www.quitsa.org.au)  
[www.quittas.org.au](http://www.quittas.org.au)

[www.quitwa.com](http://www.quitwa.com)  
[www.actcancer.org](http://www.actcancer.org)  
[www.cancercouncil.com.au](http://www.cancercouncil.com.au)  
[www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au)

**Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)** leaflets – your pharmacist can advise on availability.

**NPS Medicines Line** – phone 1300 888 763 Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm EST.

**The Poisons Information Centre** – in case of poisoning phone 131 126 from anywhere in Australia.

**Pharmacy Self Care Support** – phone 1300 369 772 and ask for the Pharmacy Self Care Field Officer.

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

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