

# Products to help you quit smoking

NRT—for example, patches and gum—and prescribed medications are the two main types of products commonly used by people who want to quit smoking.

## Nicotine replacement therapy

NRT products are used to replace some of the nicotine that you would normally receive through smoking cigarettes. Many people find using NRT useful when trying to quit smoking as it helps to ease some of the symptoms of withdrawal, such as cravings and anxiety.

NRT does not contain the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, such as tar, carbon monoxide and other cancer-causing agents. NRT products include patches, gum, lozenges, inhalators, mouth spray and mouth strips. NRT is available

from pharmacies and selected items are available in supermarkets. It is important to use NRT for at least eight weeks, even if you have stopped smoking. Always read the information sheet enclosed with your products.

## Prescribed non-nicotine oral medication

Bupropion Hcl and Varenicline are non-nicotine oral medications that are only available by prescription from your general practitioner (GP). These medications work differently, but both approximately double your chance of quitting successfully. They work to reduce cravings and withdrawals by working on the nicotine reward pathway in the brain. This medication has been found to be an effective aide to smoking cessation for people who have been

assessed by their GP as clinically suitable. It is very important to take the full course of medication even if you have stopped smoking.

New products to help people quit are constantly being developed. To keep up-to-date with what is new and available; contact your GP or pharmacist.

### Products are not magic bullets.

While using smoking cessation products can help you reduce physical cravings and withdrawals, it is still important to plan for the habit and routine associated with smoking. Research shows that combining smoking cessation products with counselling and support from a health professional increases your chances of quitting successfully. Support is available from your GP and from **Quitline (13 7848)**.

Product	Information	Advantages	Considerations
Nicotine patch	An adhesive patch is applied to a non-hairy area of skin. Patches release a steady dose of nicotine while in direct contact with the skin. Patches are available in strengths ranging from 10–25mg/16 hours and 7–21mg/24 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Provides a steady dose of nicotine.</li><li>Easy to use.</li><li>Only one application a day.</li><li>Can be used privately.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>May not be suitable if you have a skin condition.</li><li>May experience allergy to the adhesives in the patch.</li><li>Need non-hairy area of skin to apply.</li><li>'Steeping down' provides no benefit. It is fine to stay on the same strength patch for the duration of the treatment.</li></ul>
Nicotine gum	A piece of gum is chewed according to the product information—chew and park method—and nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth. Gum is best used when you feel an urge or craving to smoke. Gum is available in strengths of 2mg and 4mg per piece.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Easy to use.</li><li>Available in a range of flavours.</li><li>Easy to regulate dose—use as needed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Acidic drinks—for example, coffee or soft drink—may affect the absorption of nicotine from the gum (read the information sheet for more details).</li><li>Difficult to use with dentures.</li></ul>
Nicotine lozenge	A lozenge is sucked slowly and moved from side-to-side of the mouth until it dissolves. This may take 20–30 minutes. Nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth. Best used when you feel an urge or craving to smoke. Lozenges are available in strengths of 1.5 mg per mini lozenge, and 2mg and 4mg per lozenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Easy to use.</li><li>Easy to regulate dose—use as needed.</li><li>Palatable and discrete.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lozenge should remain in the mouth until completely dissolved.</li><li>Food and drink should not be consumed while the lozenge is in the mouth.</li></ul>
Nicotine inhalator	A nicotine inhalator comes with a mouthpiece and cartridges that contain nicotine. A cartridge is attached to the mouthpiece and its contents inhaled according to the product information. This could take approximately 40 minutes. Nicotine is absorbed through the mouth. Best used when you feel an urge or craving to smoke.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Keeps your hand busy in place of holding a cigarette.</li><li>Easy to use.</li><li>Easy to regulate dose—use as needed.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Needs to be used on a regular basis.</li><li>Not very discrete.</li><li>Could reinforce smoking action for some people.</li></ul>
Nicotine mouth spray	Nicotine mouth spray is sprayed directly into the inside of your cheek or under the tongue. Nicotine is released through the lining of the mouth to help relieve the urge to smoke.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Convenient and easy to use.</li><li>Starts to relieve cravings after one minute.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Can cause tingling lips or hiccups in some users.</li><li>Does have a strong taste.</li></ul>
Nicotine mouth strip	The strip is placed on the tongue and then pressed to the roof of the mouth. Nicotine is released through the lining of the mouth to help relieve cravings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Easy to use and discrete.</li><li>Strips dissolve within three minutes.</li><li>Starts to relieve cravings quickly.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Best for smokers who have a low physical addiction.</li></ul>
Combination therapy—patches and any oral products	Combined therapy is used when a person experiences strong cravings or persistent withdrawal symptoms while using a single form of NRT. Patches are worn for a continuous dose of nicotine and any oral product is used when strong urges to smoke are experienced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Useful for people with strong cravings or persistent withdrawal symptoms.</li><li>Can be more effective for some people than using patches or any oral product alone.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Talk to your GP or pharmacist to ensure you don't exceed recommended daily doses by using two methods.</li></ul>
Nicotine assisted reduction (patches)	Starting the patch two weeks before a quit day is twice as effective as starting it on the day you quit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Smoking while using the patch is safe.</li><li>Ease in to quitting and build your confidence to stop.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Set a quit date within two weeks of starting the patches.</li></ul>
Nicotine assisted reduction (oral)	This method of assistance works by using oral NRT to cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke by half in the first six weeks. From six weeks to six months the number of cigarettes smoked is reduced until completely stopped. Oral NRT can continue to be used in accordance with the product information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>You can stop using cigarettes earlier if you are able to.</li><li>Smokers who are not ready to make a quit attempt can use NRT to help them cut down with a view to stopping later.</li><li>Ease into quitting and build confidence to stop.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Longer term method.</li><li>Damage to health from cigarette smoking continues while smoking.</li></ul>
Bupropion Hcl—for example, Zyban	Bupropion is non-nicotine based oral medication that is only available by prescription from your GP. Bupropion works in the brain to increase hormone levels in the reward centre relieving cravings and withdrawal symptoms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).</li><li>Approximately doubles quit rates.</li><li>Oral medication which is taken daily.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Discuss with your GP whether this medication is right for you.</li><li>Start Bupropion while you are smoking with the aim to stop smoking in the second week of taking the medication.</li><li>This medication is not suitable if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.</li></ul>
Varenicline tartrate—for example, Champix	Varenicline tartrate is an oral medication that is only available by prescription from your GP. Varenicline tartrate works by blocking and mimicking the effects of nicotine in the body, thereby reducing cravings and withdrawal symptoms. It is a non-nicotine based medication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Listed on the PBS.</li><li>More than doubles your chances of quitting.</li><li>Oral medication which is taken daily.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Discuss with your doctor whether this medication is right for you.</li><li>Start Varenicline tartrate while you are smoking with the aim to stop smoking in the second week of taking the medication.</li><li>This medication is not suitable if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.</li></ul>



# Most people who smoke want to quit

Nearly 80 per cent of smokers make at least one attempt to quit and around half try to quit smoking each year.

The nicotine in tobacco products is addictive and quitting may not be easy, but it is possible and definitely worthwhile.

The use of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), or prescribed medication along with other supports—such as counselling—has been shown to increase a person's chance of quitting successfully by two to three times.

You should ask yourself the following questions.

Do you:

- Smoke within 30 minutes of waking?
- Smoke at least 10 cigarettes as day?
- Get withdrawal symptoms when you try to quit?

These are signs of dependence on nicotine. If you are nicotine dependent, a range of products may help.

## Withdrawal symptoms

Almost all smokers who quit smoking experience some form of nicotine withdrawal. Withdrawal symptoms are the way your body reacts when it stops receiving the nicotine found in tobacco.

People who have smoked for a long time, or who have smoked a greater number of cigarettes, may be more likely to experience withdrawal symptoms however, the severity of these symptoms varies with each individual. Symptoms can also be associated with certain times, places, situations or activities normally associated with smoking.

Symptoms of withdrawal may include:

- cravings or urges to smoke
- headaches
- increased coughing
- feelings of irritability, depression or anxiety
- feelings of restlessness and/or difficulty concentrating
- changed sleep patterns
- temporary increased appetite
- gastrointestinal upsets, such as nausea, constipation or diarrhoea due to changes in intestinal mobility.

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms are at their worst in the first two to four days after quitting and usually lessen after 10 to 14 days. After one month they have usually gone. The use of NRT or prescribed medication can assist in reducing withdrawal symptoms.

Remember, withdrawal symptoms are a positive sign that the body is returning to its normal state.

## Side-effects and cautions

It is important to remember that not all products are suitable for everyone—and it is extremely important that you read all of the enclosed product information sheet before using any medication.

Regardless of the product you choose to help you quit smoking, you should consult your GP, pharmacist or the **Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848)** if you are unsure, experience any side-effects, are pregnant, have an illness, or are taking other medications.

Each product has a range of possible side-effects that can vary between individuals. These can include symptoms such as headaches, rashes, nausea or indigestion. Some people could also experience more serious side-effects.

If you have any concerns on using these products, see your GP immediately. Information is also available on the respective product manufacturer's websites.

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## HOW TO QUIT

To improve your chance of quitting smoking for good, it is a good idea to plan ahead.

You may find these tips helpful:

- **Get support.** Quitline's trained counsellors are available to help you through the process of quitting—call **Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848)** for free information, practical assistance and support.
- **Talk to your health professional.** Discuss quitting smoking with a general practitioner (GP), pharmacist or community health worker, and plan your quit strategy together.
- **Consider using pharmacotherapy.** Different products are available to help you quit smoking. Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) includes patches, gum, lozenges, inhalers and mouth spray. The aim of NRT products is to replace some of the nicotine from cigarettes without the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, thus reducing withdrawal symptoms, such as cravings and anxiety. *Bupropion Hcl* and *Varenicline* are non-nicotine medications that are also effective in helping smokers to quit. *Bupropion Hcl* and *Varenicline* are available only on prescription and your GP can help decide if they are suitable for you.



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Further information

[www.quittas.org.au](http://www.quittas.org.au)



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