

Nicotine Patch

Nicotine patches come in different shapes and sizes. You put one nicotine patch on your skin in the morning and leave it in place all day. It releases nicotine throughout the day which is absorbed through your skin. The patch can be used daily by itself to control withdrawal symptoms, or it may be used with nicotine gum or lozenge which are taken as needed for strong cravings.

- **For best results, make sure you start on the right dose.** The nicotine patch comes in three strengths (7 mg, 14 mg, 21 mg). The right dose for you depends on how much you currently smoke. If you smoke more than 10 cigarettes per day, consider starting on the 21 mg patch.
- **The nicotine patch is typically worn for 24 hours.**
- **Put the patch on clean, dry, hair-free skin on the upper body.**
- **Wash your hands with soap and water after you apply the patch**
- **To avoid skin irritation, put the patch on a different area of your upper body each day.**
- **Combine the patch with nicotine gum or lozenge to better manage cravings.**
- **If you have a lot of cravings while using the patch, you may not be using a strong enough dose.** Consider stepping up to a higher dose. If you are already on the highest dose, talk with your doctor or other healthcare provider to help with dosing. You can also consider adding gum or lozenge, as described above.
- **What if I slip up and smoke while using the patch?** You do not need to stop using the patch if you slip up and smoke while wearing it. Throw away your cigarettes and get back on track with your quit attempt.
- **For best results, use the nicotine patch as part of a program that includes coaching support.** Connect with your state tobacco Quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW) for help.

Pros:

- Put it on at the beginning of the day, then forget about it.
- Put it on under clothing, so it is hidden.
- Can be used with other nicotine replacement medicines such as lozenge and gum.
- Provides a steady dose of nicotine all day.
- Can be kept on in the shower.
- Available in several strengths which you can reduce over-time.
- Side effects are generally minor and can be managed.
- Available without a prescription (over-the-counter)

Cons:

- You can't change how much nicotine gets released. If you have withdrawal symptoms you may need to increase your dose or add another medicine.
- May be irritating if you have sensitive skin.

Possible Side Effects *(and what you can do about them):*

- Skin redness, itching, or burning (*rotate the patch to a different site each day*).
- Headache (*try a lower dose patch*).
- Sleep disturbances such as difficulty sleeping and vivid dreams (*remove patch at night*).

Nicotine Patch Precautions (If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider before starting to use the patch.):

- A heart attack in the last two weeks.
- A serious heart rhythm problem.
- Pain in your heart (angina) that is serious or getting worse.
- Allergy to adhesive tape or other serious skin problems like psoriasis and eczema.
- Could be pregnant or are breastfeeding
- Less than 18 years old.

Nicotine Lozenge

Nicotine lozenges look like small hard candies. You put one in your mouth between your gums and your cheek. You may feel a warm or tingling sensation as it slowly dissolves. Do not chew or swallow the lozenge. The nicotine is absorbed mostly in your mouth.

Nicotine lozenges can be used every 1-2 hours, either one at a time to control withdrawal symptoms (up to 20 pieces per day), or in combination with nicotine patch as needed for stronger cravings.

- **For best results, make sure you start on the right dose.** The nicotine lozenge comes in two sizes (regular and mini) and each size comes in two strengths (2 mg and 4 mg). The right dose for you depends on when you usually have your first cigarette each day and how much you are currently smoking. If you have your first cigarette within 30 minutes of waking, you should consider starting with the 4 mg dose. If you are using the lozenge along with the nicotine patch, you may want to start with the 2 mg dose. Over time (typically after 8 to 12 weeks), you can lower the dose and how often you use it with the goal of eventually stopping use of the lozenge completely.
- **Use 1 lozenge every 1-2 hours for the first six weeks of your quit attempt.** Think ahead about when you might get a craving for a cigarette, and then use a lozenge **before** the craving happens.
- **If you are using the lozenge along with the nicotine patch,** you may not need to use the lozenge as frequently because you will use it when you get or expect a craving. Do not use more than 5 lozenges in 6 hours, and do not use more than 20 lozenges per day.
- **Do not use more than one lozenge at a time, and do not use one lozenge right after another.** This could cause side effects like heartburn or nausea.
- **Do not eat or drink for 15 minutes before using the lozenge or while the lozenge is in your mouth.** Food and drinks that are acidic, such as soda and coffee, can stop the lozenge from working as well.
- **Nicotine lozenges are not like regular lozenges.** To use properly, put the lozenge in your mouth between your gums and your cheek. You may feel a warm or tingling sensation. Allow the lozenge to dissolve slowly over 20-30 minutes, moving it around every so often from one side of your mouth to the other. Do not chew, suck, or swallow it.

Pros:

- Can be used regularly and when you feel withdrawal symptoms or urges coming on.
- Acts faster than nicotine patch or quit-smoking pills.
- Can be used with the patch to deal with breakthrough urges.
- You control how often you use it, so you won't get more nicotine than you want.
- May help delay weight gain associated with quitting.
- Comes in two sizes, regular and mini. Each of these is available in two strengths.
- May help substitute for a cigarette because you put it in your mouth.
- May be easier to use than gum.
- Available without a prescription (over-the-counter).

Cons:

- You must remember to use it regularly and often.
- You should not eat or drink for 15 minutes before using or when it is in your mouth.
- Some people don't like the taste of nicotine lozenges (the mini size may work better).
- Can cause stomach upset.

Possible Side Effects *(and what you can do about them)*:

- Nausea, hiccups, or heartburn *(do not chew, suck or swallow; try lower dose or wait longer between doses)*.
- Trouble sleeping *(don't use for several hours before bedtime)*.
- Headache or cough *(try lower dose or wait longer between doses)*.

Nicotine Lozenge Precautions *(If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider before starting to use the lozenge.)*:

- A heart attack in the last two weeks.
- A serious heart rhythm problem.
- Pain in your heart (angina) that is serious or getting worse.
- Could be pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Less than 18 years old.

Nicotine Gum

Nicotine gum is not used like ordinary chewing gum. You chew it a few times and then “park” it between your cheek and the space below your teeth. The nicotine is absorbed mostly in your mouth.

Nicotine gum can be used every 1-2 hours by itself to control withdrawal symptoms, or it may be used as needed for stronger cravings when used in combination with nicotine patch.

- **For best results, make sure you start on the right dose.** The nicotine gum comes in two strengths (2 mg and 4 mg). The right dose for you depends on when your first cigarette is each day and how much you are currently smoking. If you have your first cigarette within 30 minutes of waking, you should consider starting with the 4 mg dose. Over time (typically between 8 - 12 weeks), you can lower the dose and how often you use it, until you stop using the gum completely.

- **Use one piece of gum every 1-2 hours for the first 6 weeks of your quit attempt.** Think ahead when you might get a craving for a cigarette and use a piece of gum **before** the craving happens.
- **If you are using gum along with a nicotine patch,** you may not need gum as frequently because you'll use it when you get or expect a craving. Don't use more than 24 pieces of gum per day.
- **Do not eat or drink for 15 minutes before or during use.** Food and drinks that are acidic, such as soda and coffee, can stop the gum from working as well.
- **Nicotine gum is not like regular chewing gum.** To use it correctly, bite down slowly on the gum until you feel a tingling in your mouth. Then "park" the gum between the inside of your cheek and your gums. Hold it for about a minute to let the nicotine absorb into your body. Then repeat this "chew" and "park" process until the tingling stops (usually about 30 minutes), occasionally changing where you "park" the gum in your mouth.

Pros:

- Can be used regularly and when you feel withdrawal symptoms or urges coming on.
- Acts faster than nicotine patch or quit-smoking pills.
- Can be used with the patch to deal with breakthrough urges.
- You control how often you use it so you won't get more nicotine than you want.
- May help delay weight gain associated with quitting.
- Comes in two strengths.
- May help substitute for a cigarette because you put it in your mouth.
- Available without a prescription (over-the-counter).

Cons:

- You have to remember to use it regularly and often.
- You should not eat or drink for 15 minutes before using or when it is in your mouth.
- Some people don't like the taste or feel of nicotine gum.
- May be hard to use if you have dentures or other dental work.
- Requires learning how to use it properly to work and to avoid side effects.
- Can cause stomach upset.

Possible Side Effects (*and what you can do about them*):

- Mouth or jaw soreness (*don't chew it like gum – [learn more](#) about how to use*).
- Stomach discomfort, hiccups, and too much saliva (*do not chew, suck or swallow; try lower dose or wait longer between doses*).
- Light-headedness, nausea/vomiting, throat and mouth irritation from getting too much nicotine too fast (*review [use instructions](#) – don't chew like gum*).

Nicotine Gum Precautions (If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider before starting to use gum.):

- A heart attack in the last two weeks.
- A serious heart rhythm problem.
- Pain in your heart (angina) that is serious or getting worse.
- TMJ disease (bad pain in your jaw especially when eating).
- Could be pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Less than 18 years old.

Nicotine Oral Inhaler

The nicotine oral inhaler is a small plastic tube shaped like a fat cigarette. You need a prescription for it. You puff frequently on it with shallow puffs throughout the day. Unlike an asthma inhaler, the medicine is not inhaled into the lungs. The nicotine is absorbed mostly in the back of your throat. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you detailed instructions on how to use it, and help you set and adjust your dose.

- **You'll need a prescription** from a prescribing healthcare provider for the nicotine oral inhaler.
- **The nicotine oral inhaler may look like a cigarette, but you need to use it differently.** You do not need to inhale as deeply for the medicine to work. Do not inhale into the lungs like a cigarette, and **do not use it like a traditional asthma inhaler.** Instead, take frequent, short, and shallow puffs from the inhaler, like how you might sip from a straw. Use the inhaler for four 5-minute sessions, or continually for about 20 minutes (which is about how long one cartridge will last).
- **Use the nicotine oral inhaler often enough, as directed by your doctor or other healthcare provider, to help control cravings for cigarettes.**
- **Do not eat or drink for 15 minutes before using the inhaler, or during use.**

Pros:

- Can be used regularly and when you feel withdrawal symptoms or urges coming on.
- Acts faster than nicotine patch or quit-smoking pills.
- Can be used with the patch to deal with breakthrough urges.
- You control how often you use it, so you won't get more nicotine than you want.
- May help substitute for a cigarette because you put it in your mouth.

Cons:

- You must remember to use it regularly and often.
- Doesn't work as well in cold weather.
- You should not eat or drink for 15 minutes before using or during use.
- May be visible to people around you when using.
- Requires a prescription.

Possible Side Effects (*and what you can do about them*):

- Mouth and throat irritation (*very common but may lessen with continued use*).
- Runny nose, cough (*often people get used to these. Talk to your doctor if they bother you*).
- Headache (*Consider waiting longer between doses and talk to your doctor*).
- Hiccups or stomach discomfort (*try lower dose or wait longer between doses*).

Oral Inhaler Precautions (If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider before starting to use inhaler.):

- A heart attack in the last two weeks.
- A serious heart rhythm problem.
- Pain in your heart (angina) that is serious or getting worse.
- Asthma and chronic lung disease.
- Could be pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Less than 18 years old.

Nicotine Nasal Spray

Nicotine nasal spray comes in a hand-held sprayer bottle. You need a prescription for it. You use one spray in each nostril frequently throughout the day. The medicine is not inhaled. The nicotine is absorbed mostly in your nose. It is usually prescribed to people with severe nicotine addiction. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you detailed instructions on how to use it, and help you set and adjust your dose.

- **You'll need a prescription** from a prescribing healthcare provider.
- **To use the nasal spray**, first blow your nose to ensure it is clear. Tilt your head back slightly. Put the tip of the bottle into your nostril – as far as you feel comfortable. Breathe through your mouth. Then spray once in each nostril. Do not sniff, swallow, or inhale while spraying. If your nose runs, gently sniff to keep the medicine in your nose, where it will be absorbed. Wait at least 2-3 minutes before blowing your nose. One bottle of nasal spray typically delivers about 200 sprays.
- **During the first week, most people experience a hot, peppery feeling in the back of the throat or nose, as well as sneezing, coughing, watery eyes, or runny nose** when using the nasal spray. These symptoms should lessen after a week of regular use. Contact your doctor or other healthcare provider if the symptoms are particularly bothersome or do not go away.
- **Use the nicotine nasal spray often enough, as directed by your doctor or other healthcare provider, to help control cravings for cigarettes.** One dose of nasal spray is 2 sprays (one in each nostril). To ensure that your body gets enough nicotine to ease your withdrawal symptoms, it is best to use at least 8 doses per day for the first 6 weeks. Do not use more than 40 doses per day. People typically start with 1 to 2 doses per hour. Your doctor can help you set and adjust your dose and can talk about gradually reducing your dose when you are ready.
- **If the bottle breaks or leaks, wear rubber gloves to wipe up the liquid with a paper towel and to wash surfaces thoroughly.** Do not let the liquid come in contact with your skin, mouth, or eyes. If it does, rinse with plain water immediately. Nicotine overdose can occur when nicotine is absorbed through the skin.

Pros:

- Can be used regularly and when you feel withdrawal symptoms or urges coming on.
- Delivers nicotine most rapidly of all nicotine replacement medicines (NRTs).
- Can be used with the patch to deal with breakthrough urges.
- You control how often you use it, so you won't get more nicotine than you want.

Cons:

- Usually takes several days to get used to nose irritation.
- You must remember to use it regularly and often.
- Some people don't like having to spray medicine into their nose.
- It's more addictive than other forms of NRT but still safer and less addictive than smoking cigarettes.
- May be visible to people around you when using.
- Requires a prescription.

Possible Side Effects *(and what you can do about them):*

- Nose and throat irritation; hot, peppery, burning feeling *(very common, but may lessen with continued use)*.
- Tearing, runny nose, sneezing, or cough *(often people get used to these. Talk to your doctor if they continue to bother you)*.
- Headache *(Consider waiting longer between doses and talk with your doctor)*.

Nasal Spray Precautions (If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider before starting to use spray.):

- A heart attack in the last two weeks.
- A serious heart rhythm problem.
- Pain in your heart (angina) that is serious or getting worse.
- Problems in your nose or sinuses.
- Severe breathing problems like asthma.
- Could be pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Less than 18 years old.

Varenicline (Chantix)

Varenicline is a pill that does not contain nicotine. You need a prescription for it. It works differently than other quit-smoking medicines and may be an especially good option for people who have tried using other medicines to quit before but haven't been able to quit successfully.

Varenicline comes in two strengths: 0.5 mg (a white pill) and 1 mg (a blue pill). Your doctor or pharmacist can give you detailed instructions on how to use it. They can also help you set and adjust your dose.

- **You'll need a prescription** from a prescribing healthcare provider for varenicline. Take varenicline exactly as directed by your doctor or other healthcare provider.
- **Varenicline is a pill** that comes in two strengths: 0.5 mg (a white pill) and 1 mg (a blue pill). Varenicline does not contain nicotine.
- **Your doctor or other healthcare provider will help you decide when to start taking varenicline.** There are two ways that people commonly use it:
 - **Option 1:** You choose a quit date when you stop smoking and then start taking varenicline one week before your quit date. This helps the medicine build up in your body before you quit. You can keep smoking during this time but be sure to stop smoking on your quit date.
 - **Option 2:** You start taking varenicline before you choose your exact quit date. Then you pick a quit date that is 8 to 35 days after you start taking varenicline. Be sure to quit smoking on the quit date you've set.
- **Your doctor or other healthcare provider will give you dosing instructions.** Most people are started on a lower dose at first to get used to the medication:
 - Days 1 to 3: Take one white pill (0.5 mg) each day.
 - Days 4 to 7: Take two white pills (0.5 mg) per day – one in the morning & one in the evening.
 - Days 8 until the end of treatment: Take two blue pills (1 mg each) per day – one in the morning and one in the evening.

- **Most people take varenicline for 12 weeks.** Your healthcare provider might prescribe it for longer, if needed.
- **Varenicline can have side effects:**
 - **Be careful when driving or operating machinery until you know how varenicline may affect you.** Some people may feel sleepy or dizzy, or have trouble concentrating.
 - **If you are using varenicline and experience hostility, agitation, depression, suicidal thoughts, or changes in how you act** that you don't think are due to quitting smoking, you should stop taking the medicine and talk to your doctor right away. Get emergency medical help if needed.
 - **Tell your doctor or other healthcare provider if you have new or worsening symptoms of heart disease while taking varenicline, including chest pain and shortness of breath. Get emergency medical help if needed.**

Varenicline is a pill you take twice a day. You start taking it at least one week before you quit, gradually increasing the dose. It does not contain nicotine, so it works differently than the nicotine replacement medicines.

Pros:

- Simple to use so may be easier to stick with it.
- Your chance of successful quitting with a single medicine is best with varenicline.
- Varenicline gets in the way of nicotine in the brain so you don't enjoy nicotine as much if you use a cigarette.
- Can gradually reduce your smoking, since you start taking it before quitting.

Cons:

- Need to take it with food or a full glass of water to help avoid nausea.
- May cost more if you have to pay for it yourself.
- Requires a prescription.

Possible Side Effects (*talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider about what you can do*):

- Nausea or vomiting at full dose (*take with food or a glass of water. If persists, talk to your doctor about lowering the dose*).
- Sleep disturbances such as difficulty sleeping and vivid dreams (*talk to your doctor about lowering your evening dose*).
- Constipation or flatulence (*talk to your healthcare provider about diet changes or over-the-counter medicines you can take*).
- Changes in your mood or behavior (*rare – see precautions*)

Varenicline Precautions (If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider before starting to take varenicline.):

- Severe kidney problems (dose may need to be lowered).
- Could be pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Less than 18 years old.

Bupropion SR (Wellbutrin)

Bupropion is a pill that does not contain nicotine. You need a prescription for it. It works differently than other quit-smoking medicines and may be a good option for people who have tried using other medicines to quit before but haven't been able to quit successfully.

You take bupropion twice a day. Start it 1-2 weeks before quitting. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you detailed instructions on how to use it. They can also help you set and adjust your dose.

- **You'll need a prescription** from a prescribing healthcare provider for bupropion SR (sustained release).
- **Bupropion SR is a tablet (pill) that comes in one dosing strength:** 150 mg. The tablet does not contain nicotine.
- **Your doctor or other healthcare provider will help you decide when to start taking bupropion.** In general, most people start taking bupropion about 1-2 weeks before their quit date.
- **Your doctor or other healthcare provider will give you dosing instructions.**
- **Try to take bupropion at the same time every day.**
- **Bupropion can be taken with or without food.**
- **Most people take bupropion SR for 12 weeks.** Your healthcare provider might prescribe bupropion for longer, if needed.
- **Bupropion can have side effects:**
 - **Tell your prescribing healthcare provider about any other medications you may be taking.** Certain commonly used medications can increase your chances of serious side effects from bupropion.
 - **Be careful when driving or operating machinery until you know how bupropion may affect you.** Some people may feel sleepy, dizzy, or have trouble concentrating.
 - **If you are taking bupropion and experience hostility, agitation, depression, suicidal thoughts, or changes in how you act** that you don't think are due to quitting smoking, you should stop taking the medicine and talk to your doctor right away. Get emergency medical help if needed.
 - **Tell your doctor or other healthcare provider immediately if you have any medical conditions that may cause seizures or are taking any medicines that may increase the risk of seizures.** Bupropion may increase this risk.
- **Limit or avoid alcohol during treatment with bupropion**

Pros:

- Simple to use so it may be easier to stick with it.
- May help delay weight gain associated with quitting.
- If you have depression, it may help.
- Can be combined with nicotine patches under the care of your doctor or other healthcare provider.

Cons:

- More possible side-effects than other medicines.
- Cannot be used if you have ever had bulimia or anorexia, a seizure disorder, or are taking or recently quit taking an MAO inhibitor medicine. They are sometimes taken for depression. Check with your pharmacist or doctor if you are unsure.
- Requires a prescription.

Possible Side Effects (*talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider about what you can do for these*):

- Nausea, dizziness (*try taking with food, drink plenty of water*).
- Difficulty sleeping (*take evening dose in late afternoon at least 8 hours after morning dose*).
- Constipation, dry mouth (*drink plenty of water, try sugarless gum*).
- Rash (*stop taking and talk to your doctor*).
- Low risk of seizures (*one person in a thousand – stop taking and talk to your doctor immediately*).
- Nervousness, difficulty concentrating (*talk to your doctor*).
- Changes in your mood or behavior (*rare – see precautions*).

Bupropion SR Contraindications and Precautions (If any of these apply to you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare provider before starting to take bupropion.):

- A history of seizures.
- Already using bupropion for another reason.
- A history of bulimia or anorexia.
- Abruptly stopping use of sedating medicines or alcohol while taking bupropion.
- Taking or recently quit taking a type of medicine called an MAO inhibitor.
- Taking a medicine that makes you more prone to seizures.
- Liver disease.
- Could be pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Less than 18 years old.