TOBACCO-FREE ME: 1e — MEDICATIONS (NRT) (Article)

There are medications found to be helpful for people trying to quit tobacco/nicotine. One class is referred to as NRT or nicotine replacement therapy. Another class includes certain antidepressants. These medications, intended for short-term use, reduce the withdrawal symptoms of nicotine cessation. Check with your physician or health care provider to discuss whether any of these medications would be advisable for you.

But take note: NRT and antidepressant medications are not a cure-all and not a substitute for a strong desire to become tobacco/nicotine-free. They can help to minimize withdrawal symptoms, but you still need determination and resolve to quit.

Nicotine-Based Medications (NRTs)

- Nicotine gum (available over the counter) *(brand names: Nicorette Gum, etc.)*
- Nicotine patch (available over the counter) *(brand names: NicoDerm CQ, Habitrol, etc.)*
- Nicotine lozenges (available over the counter) *(brand names: Nicorette Lozenges, etc.)*
- Nicotine nasal spray (available by prescription) *(brand names: Nicotrol NS, etc.)*
- Nicotine inhaler (available by prescription) *(brand names: Nicotrol Inhaler, etc.)*

These products deliver nicotine to the body to reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms caused by tobacco cessation. Nicotine is absorbed through the skin when using the patch, and via the mucous membranes of the nose or mouth when using nicotine gum, inhalers, spray or lozenges. While these products do supply nicotine to the brain via the bloodstream, the smaller, more even doses do not produce the same feeling of immediate reward (or “kick”) that smoking, chewing or vaping does.

*WARNING: Do NOT use cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff or any other product containing nicotine while using an NRT (nicotine replacement therapy) product.*

Non-Nicotine Prescription Medications

- bupropion *(brand names: Zyban, Vokra, Wellbutrin, Budeprion, Prexaton, Elontril, etc.)*
- nortriptyline *(brand names: Sensoval, Aventyl, Pameler, Norpress, Allegron, Noritren, etc.)*
- varenicline *(brand name: Chantix, etc.)*
Bupropion and nortriptyline have shown to be effective in helping tobacco/nicotine users quit. Note that not all antidepressants have this same effectiveness. These particular ones are believed to be effective for two reasons: 1) they help relieve depression (one symptom of nicotine withdrawal), and 2) they interfere with the brain chemistry that produces nicotine-produced pleasure and adrenaline surges.

Varenicline (Chantix) was developed specifically for smoking cessation. It does not have antidepressant characteristics, but it does seem effectively to neutralize the brain chemistry action that causes pleasure from nicotine use. This action works to reduce cravings.

[WARNING: Only use these prescription medications under the care and guidance of a physician. If you have any atypical mood, thinking, or behavior changes, seek medical attention immediately.]

Guide to NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapy) Use

(NOTE: “OTC” = over the counter / “Rx” = by prescription only)

[WARNING: These guidelines are for informational use only. When using prescription NRT, follow your physician’s instructions exactly. When using over-the-counter NRT, follow the label instructions, or your physician’s instructions, exactly.]

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<tr>
<th>Medication</th>
<th>Dosing</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Long-Acting Products</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicotine Patch (OTC)</td>
<td>Use one patch every day. This is a 24-hr. patch that comes in 3 doses for tapering. Recommended daily dosing scheme is 21 mg for 4 weeks; 14 mg for 2 weeks; 7 mg for 2 weeks.</td>
<td>Every morning place a fresh patch on a relatively hairless area of skin between the waist and neck. If sleep disruption occurs, remove the patch at bedtime. Use a hydrocortisone cream for minor skin reactions. Recommended length of treatment is 6-14 weeks.</td>
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<td><em>(Nicoderm CQ, generic nicotine patch)</em></td>
<td>SMOKERS: 1 pack per day (PPD) smokers, start with 21 mg. Half PPD, start with 14 mg. Less than half PPD, start with 7 mg.</td>
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<td>SMOKELESS TOBACCO: 2-3 cans/pouches per week, start with 21 mg. Over 3 cans/pouches per week, start with 42 mg. Over 4 cans/pouches per week, lozenge as needed.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Short-Acting Products</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicotine Gum (OTC)</td>
<td>Use 2 mg (less than 25 cigarettes/day) and 4 mg (more than 25 cigarettes/day) pieces on a regular schedule or as needed. Up to 24 pieces of gum can be used daily.</td>
<td>Chew the gum slowly until mint or pepper is tasted. Then park the gum between the cheek and gum to permit absorption through the oral mucosa. Repeat when taste subsides, and continue for approximately 30 minutes. Avoid eating or drinking for 15 minutes before and during use. Use for up to 14 weeks.</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>(Nicorette, generic nicotine gum)</em></td>
<td>Recommended dosing scheme is 1 piece every 1-2 hrs. for weeks 1-6; every 2-4 hrs. for weeks 7-9; every 4-8 hrs. for weeks 10-14.</td>
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### Nicotine Lozenge (OTC)
*Nicorette Lozenge, Commit Lozenge, generic nicotine lozenge, Nicorette Mini Lozenge - dissolves 3 times faster than regular lozenge*  
Use 2 or 4 mg lozenge for those who smoke their first cigarette after 30 minutes of waking. Recommended dosing scheme is 1 lozenge every 1-2 hrs. for weeks 1-6; every 2-4 hrs. for weeks 7-9; every 4-8 hrs. for weeks 10-12.  
Suck on the lozenge until it dissolves. Do not bite or chew it like a hard candy, and do not swallow it. Do not eat or drink 15 minutes before using or while the lozenge is in your mouth. Recommended length of therapy is 12 weeks.

### Nicotine Nasal Spray (Rx)  
A dose is one spray in each nostril (1 mg total nicotine). Initial treatment is 1-2 doses per hour, as needed, for symptom relief. Minimum treatment is 8 doses/day; maximum is 40 doses/day (5 doses/hour). Each bottle contains 100 mg of nicotine.  
Do not sniff, inhale or swallow during administration as this increases irritating effects. Tilt the head back slightly during administration. Duration of therapy is 3-6 months.

### Nicotine Inhaler (Rx)  
*(Nicotrol Inhaler)*  
Puff as needed. One cartridge delivers 4 mg of nicotine over 80 inhalations (about 20 minutes). 6-16 cartridges should be used per day, with tapering of use in the last 6-12 weeks of therapy.  
Avoid eating or drinking 15 minutes before and during use. Duration of therapy is 3-6 months.

### Bupropion SR (Rx) *(may be combined with nicotine replacement)*
- *Zyban (Rx)*  
- *Wellbutrin (Rx)*  
  
Follow your physician’s instructions exactly.  
Be cautious if you have a history of seizures and related issues such as bulimia/anorexia or binge drinking.

### Varenicline (Rx)  
- *Chantix (Rx)*  

Follow your physician’s instructions exactly.  
Be cautious of behavior changes such as agitation, depression, aggression or suicidal ideation.

### By Dependence Level

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<tr>
<th>Dependence Level</th>
<th>NRT Dosage</th>
<th>Combination Therapy</th>
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| **High**         | *Patch*: 21 mg/24 hrs. or 15 mg/16 hrs.  
*Inhaler*: 6-12 cartridges per day (10 mg/cartridge)  
*Lozenge*: 4 mg  
*Gum*: 4 mg | *Patch*: 21 mg/24 hrs. or 15 mg/16 hrs.  
**AND**  
*Lozenge* or *gum*: 2 mg |
| **Moderate**     | *Patch*: 21 mg/24 hrs. or 15 mg/16 hrs.  
*Inhaler*: 6-12 cartridges per day  
*Lozenge*: 4 mg  
*Gum*: 4 mg | *Patch*: 21 mg/24 hrs. or 15 mg/16 hrs.  
**AND**  
*Lozenge* or *gum*: 2 mg |
| **Low to Moderate** | *Patch*: 14 mg/24 hrs. or 10 mg/16 hrs.  
*Inhaler*: 6-12 cartridges per day  
*Lozenge*: 2 mg  
*Gum*: 2 mg | *Patch*: 14 mg/24 hrs. or 15 mg/16 hrs.  
**AND**  
*Lozenge* or *gum*: 2 mg |
| **Low**          | May not need NRT.  
Monitor for withdrawal symptoms.  
*Patch*: 7 mg  
*Lozenge*: 2 mg  
*Gum*: 2 mg |