



Smoking Cessation Medications

Research shows that smoking cessation medications are effective in helping people quit smoking. When used in conjunction with behavioral counseling, quit smoking rates are even greater. Smoking cessation medications are very safe when used correctly, and there is little chance of overdose or addiction development.

What smoking cessation medications are available?

- Bupropion (Zyban®, Wellbutrin®)
- Varenicline (Chantix®)
- Nicotine patch (Nicoderm®, Nicotrol®, Habitrol®)
- Nicotine gum (Nicorette®)
- Nicotine lozenge (Commit®)
- Nicotine inhaler (Nicotrol® Inhaler)
- Nicotine nasal spray (Nicotrol® NS)

How do these medications differ from one another?

- Smoking cessation medications can be classified as long-acting (nicotine patch, bupropion, varenicline) or short-acting (gum, lozenge, inhaler, spray).
- Some are available over-the-counter (nicotine patch, gum, lozenge), while others are available with a prescription only (inhaler, nasal spray, bupropion, varenicline).
- Medications include non-nicotine medications (bupropion, varenicline) and nicotine replacement therapy (nicotine patch, gum, lozenge, inhaler, nasal spray).

How does nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) work?

- NRT works by providing a “hit” of nicotine without any of the other cancer-causing substances found in cigarette smoke.
- NRT provides a continual stream of nicotine, which can help counteract withdrawal symptoms and cravings.
- The nicotine in NRT medications takes longer to reach your brain than the nicotine inhaled through a cigarette.

What more should I know about smoking cessation medications?

- Combinations may work better than single medications. However, some medications should not be used in combination with others.
- Sometimes people don't use enough medication. More medication can offer more comfort, particularly if you are a heavy smoker.
- Those in the process of quitting should plan on using medications for a minimum of 2 months, and can continue as long as needed.
- Smoking cigarettes should be avoided while taking medications, in most cases.
- If a person selects NRT, they should begin on their designated quit day.
- Use of prescription medications bupropion and varenicline should begin 1-2 weeks before your quit date.

Your health care provider can answer any questions you may have about smoking cessation medications. Consult your health care provider before deciding which medications are best for you.