

Smoking Cessation Products Fact Sheet

The nicotine in tobacco products is addictive, making quitting smoking difficult. While it may not be easy, quitting smoking is possible and definitely worthwhile.

About 60 per cent of smokers wish to quit, but find it difficult. Many attempts are usually required before successfully quitting.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products such as patches, gum, lozenges, sublingual tablets and inhalers, and prescribed medications, are commonly used to help people quit smoking. These products are particularly useful for people who have had difficulty quitting in the past. Research shows that NRT and other medications, on average, increase the chance of successfully quitting by two to three times.

There are no real risks of using NRT, using these products to quit is always safer than continuing to smoke. It is, however, important to follow the product instructions carefully before using these products.

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 nicotine and the other chemicals found in tobacco smoke. People who have smoked for longer or 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.

NRT products and other medications can help to reduce some of the nicotine withdrawal symptoms experienced by people giving up smoking. Symptoms of nicotine withdrawal can include cravings for tobacco, irritability, frustration, feeling angry, sleep problems, depressed mood, feeling anxious, difficulty in concentrating, restlessness, decreased heart rate, increased appetite or weight gain.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy Products

NRT is used to replace some of the nicotine that you would normally receive through smoking cigarettes. NRT does not contain the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke such as tar, carbon monoxide and other cancer-causing agents. Many people find using NRT useful when trying to quit as it helps to ease some of the symptoms of withdrawal such as cravings and anxiety. The products work by making the cravings less strong. It's important to not stop using NRT too early as this can increase the chances of relapse to smoking. NRT products are widely available from pharmacies, and some forms are available in supermarkets.

Varenicline

Varenicline, most commonly known as Champix®, is a drug for smoking cessation. It does not contain nicotine and is not addictive. Varenicline is an oral medication that is only available by prescription from

a doctor. It is important to talk with your general practitioner about possible side effects, or interactions with other medications. Varenicline has a different mechanism of action to that of other smoking-cessation products. It works by blocking, and partially mimicking, the effects of nicotine in your brain, reducing cravings and withdrawal symptoms.

Varenicline is:

- useful for people who have had difficulty quitting in the past
- listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- should be started while still smoking with a quit date set in the second week of treatment
- should be used in conjunction with quit smoking support such as the Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848).

Bupropion Hcl

Bupropion Hcl, most commonly known as Zyban®, Clorpax® or Prexaton®, is a drug for smoking cessation. It does not contain nicotine and is not addictive. Bupropion Hcl is an oral medication that is only available by prescription from a doctor. It is important to talk with your general practitioner about possible side effects. Bupropion Hcl works by blocking the effects of nicotine in your brain.

Bupropion Hcl is:

- useful for people who have had difficulty quitting in the past
- listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)
- should be started while still smoking with a quit date set in the second week of treatment.

Side-effects and cautions

Not all products are suitable for everyone. It is important that you read the enclosed product information sheet before using any medication. Regardless of the product you choose to help you quit smoking, you should consult your general practitioner, pharmacist or the Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848) if you are unsure, experience any side-effects, are pregnant, have an illness, are taking other medications or are under 18 years of age. Each product has a range of possible side-effects which 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 general practitioner immediately. Information is also available on the product manufacturer's website.

How to quit smoking

Quitline 13 QUIT

Smoking cessation advice, information and support can increase your chance of quitting successfully. The combination of receiving support and the use of NRT or other medications to quit is even better. Contact the Quitline on 13 QUIT (13 7848) and ask to speak to a Quitline Counsellor for information and assistance with quitting. They have lots of experience in helping people quit smoking, and are available 7 days a week.

Talk to your health professional

Discuss quitting with your general practitioner or pharmacist. Before using any products to help you quit, tell your health professional if you have a medical condition or are taking other medicines, including natural medicines.



Any time. Any day. We're here to help.



www.health.qld.gov.au/quitsmoking

Smoking Cessation Products available on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)

The following smoking cessation products are now cheaper if you see your doctor because they are on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

NRT patches give you a steady dose of nicotine throughout the day to take the edge off difficult cravings. They stick to a non-hairy part of your skin, like your arm. If you wake up during the night to smoke then you might want to use a 24 hour patch - otherwise a 16 hour patch might be best for you.

The types of patches available on the PBS** are:

- Nicorette® - 16 hour patch containing 15mg of nicotine
- Nicabate P® - 24 hour patch containing 21 mg of nicotine
- Nicotinell® - 24 hour patch containing 21 mg of nicotine

A 12 week supply of nicotine patches is now available by prescription from your doctor once per year (one original script with two repeats) at the subsidised rate. They will cost \$34.20*, or \$5.60* for concession card holder, for a four week supply. This is only \$103* for the full 12 weeks or \$17* for concession card holders.

People who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin can access two 12 week courses each year at a subsidised rate of \$17* for 12 weeks, \$35* for 24 weeks or free for concession card holders. Talk to your doctor for more information and to find out if you meet the full eligibility criteria.

If you have already tried NRT at the subsidised rate and have not quit smoking, you may be able to try Bupropion or Varenicline on the PBS within the same year.

Bupropion (“Zyban” and “Prexaton”)

Bupropion is a tablet that you take to reduce nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms, like headaches. It is different to NRT because it does not contain nicotine. You can smoke for up to two weeks while you're on this medication, setting a quit date between day 8 and day 14. You take the tablets for 7 weeks. The average cost of Bupropion is at the subsidised rate is \$34.20* per month or \$103* for the full course.

Varenicline (“Champix”)

Varenicline is also a tablet that helps to reduce nicotine cravings and withdrawal symptoms. It does not contain nicotine. You can smoke for up to two weeks on the tablets, setting a quit date between day 8 and day 14. You take this medication for a total of 12 weeks. However, if you have successfully quit smoking at 12 weeks you can get another 12 week course from your doctor at the subsidised rate. The average cost of the 12 week course is \$34.20* per month or \$103* for the full course.

**Prices may change. The following information was taken from the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) website. For further information please phone the PBS General Enquiries number 1800 202 613 or the Quitline 137848. This information is accurate as at 01/04/2011. ** Products listed as available on the PBS are accurate as at 01/04/2011.*