



Let's talk about smoking

Stop-smoking Pharmacotherapy Information

Some key points:

- Evidence shows that providing a combination of pharmacotherapy products *and* face-to-face behavioural support from a specialist is more effective than using either form of support on its own
- Anyone making a quit attempt should be encouraged to use the local specialist service.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

NRT is not a magic cure, but many people find that NRT helps minimise the physical withdrawal symptoms and so enables them to better deal with the social and behavioural aspects of their addiction.

NRT products supply a clean, low level of nicotine to the body. While some products can be addictive/habit forming, nicotine itself does not have as serious an impact on health as the other constituents of tobacco. NRT provides a lower dose of nicotine than that received from cigarettes, and it contains none of the harmful components of tobacco, e.g. carbon monoxide and tar. For this reason there are very few, if any, cases where NRT use is not preferable to continued smoking.

All NRT products are started on the quit date and continued for approximately 10-12 weeks. Nicotine transdermal patches are a long-acting product, changed daily and worn for 16 or 24 hours. They release around 1mg nicotine every hour. Examples of the short-acting products are: gum, lozenges, microtabs, strips, inhalator, nasal spray and mouth spray. Choice of product is usually down to client preference and some clients benefit from using a combination of products, for example a patch and short acting product.

Most courses of NRT provide a gradually reduced dose of nicotine so that the smoker is slowly weaned off nicotine altogether, usually over the course of 10-12 weeks. People using NRT should not use tobacco as this can result in nausea and dizziness (symptoms of a nicotine overdose) plus it can also hinder their quit attempt by opening up the receptors in the brain to the higher arterial peaks that feeds the addiction.

Varenicline (Champix®)

Varenicline is a non-nicotine based medicine used to help adults stop smoking. It is available as a tablet usually taken once a day at a lower dose for the first few days, building up to a stronger dose taken twice a day. People start taking it one to two weeks before they plan to stop smoking and it is usually taken for about 3 months. Varenicline can help reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms associated with stopping smoking. Also, if someone taking Varenicline smokes a cigarette they may find it less satisfying and less pleasurable than before which can reduce the risk of a complete relapse.

Pharmacotherapy products and mental health

The safety of drugs for smoking cessation, in particular Varenicline and its effects on mental health, has been debated by regulatory authorities, researchers, prescribers, and patients for a number of years. At the moment, it *can* be used as currently there is no evidence of an increased risk of suicide or attempted suicide, suicidal ideation, depression, or death with Varenicline. It would however need to be monitored closely and used with caution for patients with psychiatric illness, as these findings can be at odds with some patients' experience of psychiatric adverse effects associated with Varenicline. For more information regarding the latest thinking on Varenicline (Champix®) and mental health see: <http://www.bmj.com/content/350/bmj.h1168> [accessed 2 October 2017] and BNF Online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18578/BNF.520176785> [accessed 2 October 2017]

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For more detailed information on NRT or other products contact your local stop-smoking service. A brief summary of product details is given below:

NRT gum	
<p>Strengths/dose</p> <p>2mg and 4mg</p>	<p><i>Who would this product suit?</i></p> <p>Adult (18+) treatment should continue for 3 months before reducing dose Child (12-17) treatment should continue for 3 months before reducing dose This is a short-acting product that can provide quick relief from cravings or is useful for those who do not smoke regularly If individuals smoke more than 20 cigarettes each day or require more than 15 pieces of 2mg strength gum each day, increase to 4mg</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using the product?</i></p> <p>The gum is chewed to release the nicotine and then 'parked' between the gum and cheek then chewed at intervals (the nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth) Gum should not be swallowed Up to 15 pieces of gum can be used daily Avoid acidic drinks and coffee within 15 minutes of chewing as this can reduce absorption of nicotine</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i></p> <p>Poor technique: Continuous chewing can cause throat and stomach irritation, indigestion and hiccoughs</p>
NRT Patches	
<p>Strengths/dose</p> <p>24 hour patch: 21mg/14mg/7mg</p> <p>16 hour patch: 25mg/15mg/10mg</p>	<p><i>Who would this product suit?</i></p> <p>Someone who is highly dependent on nicotine and requires a steady dose of nicotine over the day (and night, for some) Discreet and easy to use</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using the product?</i></p> <p>Use for 12 weeks and reduce through stage 1, 2 and 3 Apply daily to hairless area of the body (for ease of removal) Provides a steady dose of nicotine through the skin but not an instant response to cravings 16 hour patch removed at night and a new one applied in the morning If individual smokes within the first half hour of waking, a 24 hour patch may be more suitable. A new patch should be applied daily.</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i></p> <p>Skin irritation – do not apply to broken skin Vivid dreams/upset sleep: some clients also have these symptoms when they stop smoking with or without NRT</p>
NRT Inhalator	
<p>Strengths/dose</p> <p>Starter pack: 15mg/10mg (4 cartridges per pack)</p> <p>Refill cartridges: 15mg/10mg (36 cartridges per</p>	<p><i>Who would this product suit?</i></p> <p>Adult and child over 12 years Anyone who likes the hand to mouth action Useful short-acting relief for instant response to withdrawal symptoms and cravings Can be used as single or combination product</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using this product?</i></p>

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pack)	<p>Use when they have the urge to smoke Is not inhaled but is puffed like a pipe for 5 minutes at a time so the nicotine reaches the inside of the cheek – it is absorbed through the lining of the mouth (not the lungs) 6-12 cartridges daily for 8 weeks then reduce. Individuals should not exceed 12 cartridges of the 10mg strength daily, or 6 cartridges of the 15mg strength daily. Each cartridge contains 40 minutes puffing time but this does not need to be taken all at once: the nicotine does not evaporate once you have pierced the cartridge</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i> If technique poor it can irritate. Use with caution if you have a peptic ulcer, asthma, throat or thyroid problems</p>
NRT Lozenges	
<p>Strengths/dose 4mg/2mg/1mg</p>	<p><i>Who would the product suit?</i> Adult and child over 12 years Someone who wants a discreet, flexible product that is short-acting and provides good dose control and reduces cravings</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using this product?</i> Lozenges are placed in the mouth and moved from one side of the other until fully dissolved over a period of 20-30 minutes, allowing nicotine to be absorbed through the oral mucosal /mouth lining Similar to using nicotine gum, the lozenge should be rested between the cheek and the gum to allow absorption (otherwise the nicotine is swallowed and destroyed in the stomach) Max 15 lozenges per day (30 for the 1mg strength) aim to reduce number of lozenges used per day 1mg used for low to moderate nicotine dependency, 2mg used for moderate to strong nicotine dependency. If cravings remain, a 4mg lozenge is available</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i> Poor technique can cause throat and stomach irritation, indigestion and hiccoughs and wind</p>
NRT sublingual tablets (microtabs)	
<p>Strengths/dose 2mg nicotine</p>	<p><i>Who would the product suit?</i> Adult and child over 12 years Someone who wants a discreet, flexible product that is short-acting and provides good dose control and reduces cravings</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using this product?</i> Use 1-2 tablets hourly as required, up to 40 per day Place the tablets under the tongue and allow to dissolve (about 30 minutes) nicotine absorbed in the mouth</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i> Poor technique can cause throat and stomach irritation, indigestion and hiccoughs</p>
NRT Oral film (strips)	
<p>Strengths/dose 2.5mg nicotine</p>	<p><i>Who would the product suit?</i> Adult and child over 12 years Someone who wants a discreet, flexible product that is short-acting and provides good dose control and reduces cravings</p>

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	<p><i>What information would you give to a client about using this product?</i> For smokers who smoke more than 30 minutes after waking Put one film on your tongue, close your mouth and press your tongue gently to the roof of your mouth until the film dissolves (approx 3 minutes) do not chew or swallow whole Do not eat or drink while a film is in your mouth as this may reduce the absorption of the nicotine Do not use more than 15 films a day</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i> Nausea, indigestion/heartburn, dry mouth, sore or painful swollen throat, mouth discomfort, hiccoughs and cough. Use with caution if you have thyroid problems, serious liver or kidney problems, ulcers or stomach problems.</p>
NRT Nasal Spray	
<p>Strengths/dose</p> <p>500mcg nicotine nasal spray</p>	<p><i>Who would the product suit?</i> Adult and child over 12 years Very dependant smokers, as gives rapid relief to withdrawal symptoms and cravings due to fast delivery of nicotine</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using this product?</i> Bring head forward and place in nostril and spray; repeat in other nostril as required (one dose is a spray in each nostril) Use a maximum of 2 doses per hour (64 sprays in 24hrs) Pinch nose for several seconds until absorbed to prevent swallowing</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i> Irritation, runny nose, watery eyes and sneezing Caution in use when driving/operating machinery until used to product</p>
NRT Mouth spray	
<p>Strengths/dose</p> <p>QuickMist 1mg</p> <p>1 x 150 sprays of oromucosal (mouth) spray</p>	<p><i>Who would the product suit?</i> Adult or child over 12 years Someone who wants a flexible product that is short-acting and provides good dose control and reduces cravings quickly</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using this product?</i> Point the spray nozzle close to their open mouth, press the top of the QuickMist to release 1 spray into their mouth Use 1–2 sprays as required, individuals can spray in the mouth when the urge to smoke occurs or to prevent cravings. Individuals should not exceed 2 sprays per episode (up to 4 sprays every hour); maximum 64 sprays per day.</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i> Tingling lips, hiccups, a strong taste If technique poor – helpful to spray onto back of hand, take small piece onto finger and spread around cheeks and gum, do this several times until tolerated, then use as directed</p>
Varenicline (Champix[®])	
<p>Strengths/dose</p> <p>Week 1: 0.5mg daily for 3 days 0.5mg twice daily for 4 days</p>	<p><i>Who would the product suit?</i> Adults over 18 It is used with caution in those with a history with severe mental illness</p> <p><i>What information would you give to a client about using this product?</i></p>

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<p>Week 2-12: 1mg twice daily for 11 weeks</p>	<p>Set a date on which you will stop smoking and start taking this medicine one to two weeks beforehand, as the medicine needs time to start working (quit date should take place between day 8 to day 14 of taking this medicine) Take as prescribed for 12 weeks Take each dose after eating (ideally after breakfast and evening meal) Tell your practitioner if you develop side effects as a reduction in dose may be an option Varenicline can help reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms and make smoking less satisfying</p> <p><i>What are the main unwanted side effects?</i> Nausea, insomnia, dreams, headaches, flatulence and poor concentration If users experience suicidal thoughts or severely depressed mood then they should stop taking Varenicline and contact their doctor immediately. Use with caution in those with: decreased kidney function, epilepsy, history of psychiatric illness, e.g. depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder Not suitable for pregnant or breast feeding women or individuals under the age of 18 years</p>
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N.I.C.E. *National Institute for Clinical Excellence Quality Standard 43, Smoking: Supporting people to stop* (online). London: NICE (2013) <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs43/chapter/quality-statement-4-pharmacotherapy> [accessed 12 September 2017]

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