

## 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 the nicotine found in tobacco. People who have smoked for a long time or who have 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.

Symptoms of withdrawal may include:

- Cravings or urges to smoke.
- Headaches.
- Increased coughing.
- Feelings of irritability, depression or anxiety.
- Feelings of restlessness and/or difficulty concentrating.
- Changed sleep patterns.
- Temporary increase in appetite.
- Gastrointestinal upsets such as nausea, constipation or diarrhoea due to changes in intestinal mobility.

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms are at their worst in the first 24 to 48 hours after quitting and usually lessen after 10 to 14 days. The use of nicotine replacement therapy or prescribed medication can assist in reducing withdrawal symptoms.

Remember, withdrawal symptoms are a positive sign that the body is returning to its normal state.

## Side-effects and cautions

It is important to remember that not all products are suitable for everyone. It is extremely 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 GP, pharmacist or the Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848) if you are unsure, experience any side-effects, are pregnant, have an illness, or are taking other medications.

Each product has a range of possible side-effects that 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 GP immediately. Information is also available on the respective product manufacturers' websites.

## How to quit

To improve your chance of quitting smoking for good, it is a good idea to plan ahead. You may find these tips useful:

- **Get support:** Call Quitline 13 QUIT (13 7848) for free information, practical assistance and support. Quitline's trained counsellors are available seven days a week to help you get through the process of quitting.
- **Talk to your health professional:** Discuss quitting smoking with a general practitioner, midwife, pharmacist or community health worker and plan your quitting strategy together.
- **Consider using pharmacotherapy:** Different products are available to help you quit smoking. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) includes patches, gum, lozenges, sublingual tablets and inhalers. The aim of NRT products is to replace some of the nicotine from cigarettes without the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, thus reducing withdrawal symptoms such as cravings and anxiety. Bupropion Hcl and Varenicline are non-nicotine medications that are also effective in helping smokers to quit.

# Products to help you quit smoking



### Further information:

[www.quitnow.info.au](http://www.quitnow.info.au) • [www.cancerqld.org.au](http://www.cancerqld.org.au)  
[www.health.qld.gov.au/quitsmoking](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/quitsmoking)  
Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

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## Most people who smoke want to quit. Nearly 80 per cent of smokers make at least one attempt to quit and around half try to quit smoking each year.

The nicotine in tobacco products is addictive and quitting may not be easy, BUT quitting smoking is possible and definitely worthwhile.

The use of nicotine replacement therapy or prescribed medication along with other supports (such as counselling) has been shown to increase a person's chance of quitting successfully by two to three times.

## Products

Nicotine replacement therapy (for example, patches and gum) and prescribed medications are the two main types of products commonly used by people who want to quit smoking.

### Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)

NRT products are used to replace some of the nicotine that you would normally receive through smoking cigarettes. Many people find using NRT useful when trying to quit smoking as it helps to ease some of the symptoms of withdrawal, such as cravings and anxiety.

NRT does not contain the harmful chemicals found in tobacco smoke, such as tar, carbon monoxide and other cancer-causing agents. NRT products include patches, gum, lozenges, sublingual tablets and inhalers. NRT is available from

Do you:

- Smoke within 30 minutes of waking?
- Smoke at least 15 cigarettes a day?
- Get withdrawal symptoms when you try to quit?

These are signs of dependence on nicotine. If you are nicotine dependent, a range of products may help.

pharmacies and selected items are available in supermarkets. Always read the information sheet enclosed with your product.

### Prescribed medication

Bupropion Hcl and Varenicline are non-nicotine oral medications that are only available by prescription from your general practitioner (GP). Bupropion and Varenicline are particularly useful for people who have had difficulty quitting with or without NRT, or where a person's medical condition may exclude them from using NRT products. This medication has been found to be an effective aide to smoking cessation for people who have been assessed by their GP as clinically suitable.

New products to help people quit are constantly being developed. To keep up-to-date with what is new and available, contact your GP or pharmacist.

# Products to help you quit smoking

Product	Information	Advantages	Considerations
<b>Nicotine patch</b>	An adhesive patch is applied to a non-hairy area of skin. Patches release a steady dose of nicotine while the patch is in direct contact with the skin. Patches are available in strengths ranging from 5-15mg/16 hours and 7-21mg/24 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provides a steady dose of nicotine.</li> <li>• Easy to use.</li> <li>• Only one application a day.</li> <li>• Can be used privately.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not be suitable if you have a skin condition.</li> <li>• May experience allergy to the adhesives in the patch.</li> <li>• Need non-hairy area of skin to apply.</li> </ul>
<b>Nicotine gum</b>	A piece of gum is chewed according to the product information and nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth. Gum is best used when you feel an urge or craving to smoke. The gum is available in strengths of 2mgs and 4mgs per piece.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use.</li> <li>• Available in a range of flavours.</li> <li>• Easy to regulate dose (use as needed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acidic drinks (for example, coffee or soft drink) may affect the absorption of nicotine from the gum (read the information sheet for more detail).</li> <li>• Difficult to use with dentures.</li> </ul>
<b>Nicotine lozenge</b>	A lozenge is sucked slowly and moved from side to side of the mouth until it dissolves. This may take 20-30 minutes. Nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth and also by ingestion. Best used when you feel an urge or craving to smoke. Lozenges are available in strengths of 2mg and 4mg per lozenge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use.</li> <li>• Easy to regulate dose (use as needed).</li> <li>• Palatable and discrete.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lozenge should remain in the mouth until completely dissolved.</li> <li>• Food and drink should not be consumed while the lozenge is in the mouth.</li> </ul>
<b>Sublingual tablets</b>	A sublingual tablet is placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve, which may take up to 30 minutes. The nicotine in the sublingual tablet is absorbed through the lining of the mouth and by ingestion. Best used when you feel an urge or craving to smoke. Sublingual tablets are available in 2mg and 4mg strengths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use.</li> <li>• Discrete.</li> <li>• May be useful in situations where gum is not appropriate.</li> <li>• Easy to regulate dose (use as needed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the tablet to be effective it cannot be sucked, chewed or swallowed.</li> <li>• Food and drink should not be consumed while the tablet is in the mouth.</li> </ul>
<b>Nicotine inhaler</b>	A nicotine inhaler comes with a mouthpiece and cartridges that contain nicotine. A cartridge is attached to the mouthpiece and its contents inhaled according to the product information. This could take approximately 20 minutes. Nicotine is absorbed through the mouth. Best used when you feel an urge or craving to smoke.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeps your hands busy in place of holding a cigarette.</li> <li>• Easy to use.</li> <li>• Easy to regulate dose (use as needed).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs to be used on a regular basis.</li> <li>• Not very discrete.</li> <li>• Could reinforce smoking action for some people.</li> </ul>
<b>Combination therapy – patches and gum or lozenge</b>	Combined therapy is used when a person experiences strong cravings or persistent withdrawal symptoms while using a single form of nicotine replacement therapy. Patches are worn for a continuous dose of nicotine, and gum or lozenge is used when strong urges to smoke are experienced.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for people with strong cravings or persistent withdrawal symptoms.</li> <li>• Can be more effective for some people than using patches or gum alone.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to your GP or pharmacist to ensure you don't exceed recommended daily doses by using two methods.</li> </ul>
<b>Nicotine assisted reduction</b>	This method of assistance works by using nicotine gum, lozenge or inhaler to cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke by half in the first six weeks. From six weeks to six months the number of cigarettes smoked is reduced until completely stopped. Nicotine gum, lozenge or inhaler can continue to be used according to the product information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You can stop using cigarettes earlier if you are able to.</li> <li>• Useful for people who have severe nicotine dependence.</li> <li>• May assist people who have had extreme difficulty quitting in the past.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longer term method.</li> <li>• Damage to health from cigarette smoking continues while smoking.</li> </ul>
<b>Bupropion Hcl</b>	Bupropion is a non-nicotine based oral medication that is only available by prescription from your doctor. Bupropion works by blocking the effects of nicotine in the body and reducing the associated satisfaction of smoking. It has been found to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms for nicotine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for people who have had difficulty quitting in the past.</li> <li>• Useful for people who have used NRT with no success.</li> <li>• Listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).</li> <li>• Can be taken with nicotine patches, providing smoking has stopped.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bupropion should be started while you are still smoking and a quit date set within the first two weeks of taking the medication, preferably in the second week.</li> <li>• You need to talk with your GP about possible side-effects.</li> <li>• Bupropion should be used in conjunction with quit smoking support, such as Quitline.</li> </ul>
<b>Varenicline Tartrate (for example Champix®)</b>	Varenicline tartrate is an oral medication that is only available by prescription from your doctor. Varenicline tartrate works by blocking the effects of nicotine in the body and reducing the associated satisfaction of smoking, and has been found to reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms for nicotine. It is a <b>non-nicotine</b> based medication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Useful for people who have had difficulty quitting in the past.</li> <li>• Useful for people who have used NRT with no success.</li> <li>• Listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Varenicline tartrate should be started while you are still smoking and a quit date set within the first two weeks of treatment.</li> <li>• You need to talk with your GP about possible side effects.</li> <li>• Varenicline tartrate should be used in conjunction with quit smoking support, such as Quitline.</li> </ul>

Disclaimer: The information contained in this brochure is of a general nature only. Further advice should be sought from your GP or pharmacist before commencing treatment. As with all medications, you should ensure that you have read the instructions enclosed with the product, be aware of any conditions that prevent use and be familiar with the possible side-effects.