Nicotine Replacement Therapy and Medication

Often people find nicotine cravings the hardest thing to handle when quitting.

If that sounds like you, don’t worry! There are plenty of Nicotine Replacement Therapy products available to give you that extra support and help you to beat the addiction.

Cigarettes contain nicotine. By smoking regularly and over a long period of time, your body becomes dependent on nicotine. Giving up smoking can cause nicotine withdrawal symptoms, which include cravings, headaches, feeling irritable and not being able to sleep. Stop smoking medicines can help you manage these withdrawal symptoms.

There are three types of stop smoking medicines:

- Champix tablets (varenicline)
- Zyban tablets (bupropion)
- NRT including patches, gum, lozenges, microtabs, inhalator and nasal sprays

All of them are available from the NHS with a prescription, and Nicotine Replacement Therapy can also be bought from pharmacies without a prescription and other shops (such as supermarkets).

All are effective treatments to help you stop smoking, but you may find one suits you more than another.

Is taking nicotine replacement therapy safe?

Some people think that using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is just swapping one addiction for another. But this isn't true. NRT does not contain tar, poisons or carbon monoxide like cigarettes do, so it’s very unlikely to cause cancer. It is absorbed into your body in a different way to the nicotine absorbed from cigarettes, and it is very much less addictive.

Are there any health implications?

NRT is suitable for most adults, but if you have a heart or circulatory condition, or are on regular medication, you should check with your doctor. Similarly, if you are pregnant you should ask your doctor or midwife before using NRT. You can get a prescription for NRT or buy it over the counter.
Nicotine patches are a form of NRT (nicotine replacement therapy). They give a slow constant release of nicotine by releasing it directly into the bloodstream through the skin. We like to use the patches in a combination therapy alongside a quick releasing product. This will ensure that you are receiving a constant flow of nicotine which in turn will help curb your cravings.

Patches come in 24 hour 7/14/21 mg this is particularly beneficial for those smokers who crave nicotine immediately on waking (not suitable for pregnant women) and 16 hour 10/15/25 mg - which ever strength you start on you will need to gradually reduce the strength before stopping them completely.

Gum

The gum comes in 2 strengths 2mg and 4mg. Gum is a fast acting product as it absorbs into the body through the thin lining of the cheek.

After chewing the gum for a moment you will notice slight warmth or a very strong flavour, at this point you are releasing the nicotine and you need to park the gum between the jaw and the cheek for it to absorb into the bloodstream.

During the course of treatment you will gradually reduce the amount of gum you chew and the strength.

Cools Lozenges

Cools lozenges gradually dissolve in your mouth and start to relieve cravings within 2 minutes. Cools leave a long lasting mint flavor in your mouth.

Cools come in 2 strengths 2mg and 4mg and you will reduce down gradually through the program.
Lozenges

The lozenge works in the same way as the gum, they come in 2 strengths 2mg and 4mg. You suck the lozenge until it tastes strong or becomes hot, then you can place it at the side of your cheek to absorb. Once the taste fades you need to suck it again and release more nicotine. Continue until the lozenge has dissolved, they normally last about 30 minutes.

You will start to reduce the strength and the amount of lozenges you have throughout the course.

Inhalator

The inhalator is good for the smokers who will miss the hand to mouth function of smoking. It looks like a plastic cigarette and is absorbed through the mouth and throat.

The inhalator is a very quick working product and each cartridge has enough nicotine for three to four 20-minute puffing sessions. This equates to around 400 puffs.

You can use up to 6 cartridges a day and will need to gradually reduce this during your course.

Nasal Spray

The nasal spray is the strongest form of NRT as it delivers a fast and effective dose of nicotine through the lining of the nose. This is the fastest way for the nicotine to enter the bloodstream and is particularly useful for those with a high nicotine dependence.

You will reduce the amount of doses you have throughout the course.

Quickmist

Quickmist is a fast acting product with starts to work within 60 seconds. The mist is sprayed onto the side of the mouth and the nicotine is absorbed through the lining in the mouth straight into the blood stream. You can use up to 64 sprays a day and you will reduce this down throughout the course.
Champix – (Varenicline) / Zyban – (Bupropion)

Both these products are only available on prescription and to no one under the age of 18. They are also not available to pregnant women or if the patient has some preexisting medical conditions.

They are a medication that helps to reduce the craving by partially blocking the receptors in the brain that respond to nicotine; this therefore blocks the effect of nicotine in people who have a cigarette.

This is an 8 - 12 week course, which you will be eased into and weaned off.