

Nicotine lozenge

Please note: This information is not intended to replace the Consumer Medicine Information (pack insert) that should accompany the nicotine lozenge. Ask your pharmacist for this information leaflet if it is not in pack when you buy it.

Main points about nicotine replacement products

- All forms of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) – patches, gum, lozenges, tablets and inhaler – have been proven to help people quit smoking.¹
- Using NRT is always safer than continuing to smoke.² NRT is a safe alternative to cigarettes for smokers.³
- Using NRT will still increase your chances of quitting even if it does not completely control cravings.⁴
- Nicotine replacement products reduce the severity of cravings but you may still have them, especially in situations in which you are used to smoking.⁵⁻⁷ If your cravings are bad, other options may be suitable for you, such as using more or a higher dose nicotine product, or using two nicotine products at the same time.
- NRT is a good tool to help you quit smoking.³ But quitting isn't just about beating urges to smoke. You will also need to find new habits to take the place of smoking; for example, when socialising, relaxing, concentrating, filling in time or coping with emotions.
- Research shows that people who have the best chance of quitting using NRT also get advice or support from their doctor, pharmacist or other trained advisor (such as through the Quitline).^{1, 8, 9}
- NRT will not work as well if you stop using it too soon or, when using the gum, lozenges, tablets or inhaler, you do not use them often enough or you use them only after you have cravings.⁶ Follow the instructions on the pack or in the Consumer Medicine Information (pack insert) on how to use your chosen product to get the best value out of using NRT.
- It is common for smokers to attempt to quit a number of times before they successfully stop.⁸ On average, smokers who use NRT while quitting make fewer attempts before quitting for good.¹⁰

About smoking

Addiction to nicotine in tobacco is the major reason why people continue to smoke.¹¹

People who are dependent on nicotine usually:

- smoke their first cigarette within 30 minutes of waking up¹²
- smoke at least 10 cigarettes per day^{8, 13}

- suffer from withdrawal symptoms within 24 hours of stopping smoking, such as cravings, irritability, anxiety, depression, restlessness, hunger, poor concentration and sleep disturbances.^{11,12}

Cravings (the urge or desire to smoke) can be due to nicotine withdrawal. However, you may also have an urge or desire to smoke when you are in situations where you are used to smoking.

Certain things may trigger cravings, such as:¹²

- **places** where you normally smoke, such as home, work, or the pub
- **people** who you usually smoke with, such as family or friends; or being alone
- **habits** or **routines** where you are used to smoking, such as when drinking coffee or alcohol, talking on the telephone, after meals, or when you want to relax
- **emotions**, such as anger, boredom, being tense or upset; or for some people, when they are happy.

You need to understand why you smoke in order to plan ways to deal with situations that are most likely to make you feel like having a cigarette. People most successful at resisting urges to smoke use a range of coping strategies to help them.¹⁴ Information, advice or support is available for the cost of a local call from the Quitline (13 7848).

How can the nicotine lozenge help me quit?

The nicotine lozenge works by replacing some of the nicotine you would normally inhale from cigarettes. It is a tablet that dissolves in your mouth. It slowly releases nicotine, which you absorb through the lining of your mouth.^{6,15}

Using the lozenge can help reduce tobacco withdrawal symptoms such as cravings, frustration, difficulty concentrating, restlessness and anxiety.¹⁶⁻¹⁸ The higher dose lozenge reduces more symptoms than the lower dose.¹⁸ However, it may not stop these symptoms completely.⁶ If you feel you need more help to manage day-to-day cravings, talk to your pharmacist, doctor or the Quitline (13 7848) about your options such as using more lozenges, or using two nicotine products at the same time.³

Your doctor or pharmacist can advise you whether the nicotine lozenge is suitable for you. The lozenge works best for addicted smokers, who smoke 10 or more cigarettes per day and who want to quit.^{1,8,12} There is no difference between smoking stronger or weaker tasting cigarettes.¹⁹

How well does the lozenge work?

People who use the nicotine lozenge are twice as likely to quit and stay stopped.¹

When using the lozenge you take in less nicotine at a much slower rate than when smoking. This makes it less addictive and easier to stop using than cigarettes.^{3,19,20} Within seconds of puffing on a cigarette, high levels of nicotine reach your brain.² In contrast, the level of nicotine in your blood will rise while the lozenge dissolves (about 20 to 30 minutes) and peak after about an hour from when the lozenge was taken.²¹ Over a day, lozenge users typically absorb slightly more nicotine than from similar doses of nicotine gum; that is, about one-third (2mg lozenge) or two-thirds (4 mg lozenge) of the dose of nicotine that they would get from smoking a pack of cigarettes per day.¹⁶

The 4 mg nicotine lozenge also appears to reduce weight gain that may occur after quitting, but doesn't have a lasting effect beyond its use.¹⁶

Buying nicotine lozenges

You can buy nicotine lozenges without prescription from pharmacies and some supermarkets. The lozenges are mint flavoured. There are two different strengths of lozenge: 2 mg and 4 mg, which both come in packets of 24, 36, 48 and 72. The recommended retail prices (at November 2008) are \$23.80 for 24 pack, \$30.80 for the 36 pack, \$40.75 for the 48 pack and \$53.10 for the 72 pack, for both 2 mg and 4 mg lozenges. Pharmacy prices can be a few dollars higher or lower.

What I should tell my pharmacist or doctor

Before buying the lozenge, you should tell your pharmacist or doctor if you have an illness, or if you are taking any other medicines (even non-prescription ones). In some cases, you may need medical supervision or advice, or in other cases the nicotine lozenge may not be suitable. Please check the Consumer Medicine Information that comes with the lozenge for the latest list of common medicines and medical conditions that may be affected by using the tablet or stopping smoking.

The manufacturer's list of illnesses (at May 2007) for which you may need medical advice include: heart disease, high blood pressure, any blood circulation disorder, stroke, kidney disease, liver disease, stomach ulcer or pain, hyperthyroidism, diabetes, and phaeochromocytoma (a tumour of the adrenal gland). You should not take the lozenge if you react to aspartame or phenylalanine.^{15, 22}

The lozenge can be used by persons aged 12 years and over, however if you are under 18 years you should speak to your doctor before using the lozenge.^{9, 15} It is highly recommended that people in this age group discuss quitting smoking with a trained health advisor to benefit from using the lozenge.^{8, 22}

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, you may use the lozenge to help you quit.⁹ However, if you are able to quit without medication, that is the recommended option.^{9, 22} While using the lozenge is much safer than smoking for you and your baby, you still need to discuss the risks and benefits with your pharmacist or doctor before using it, and you should tell the doctor supervising your pregnancy.^{2, 23} Mothers using the lozenge should breastfeed their baby first, then use the lozenge soon after, as instructed in the Consumer Medicine Information.¹⁵

If you have any questions regarding these issues, please ask your doctor.

Which strength lozenge should I use?

Your doctor or pharmacist will advise you which lozenge strength is suitable for you.

To determine which strength of lozenge you should use, the time to first cigarette (TTFC) method is used. If you have your first cigarette usually within 30 minutes of waking, then the 4 mg lozenges are recommended. If you have your first cigarette of the day more than 30 minutes after you wake up, then the 2 mg lozenges are recommended.¹⁵

Using the lozenge

The nicotine lozenge is a medicine and you should use it according to the advice from your pharmacist or doctor.

You must use nicotine lozenges correctly for it to help you quit. Once you've bought the lozenges, you should set a quit date. Start using a lozenge first thing in the morning of your quit date or soon after your last cigarette – don't wait for cravings to hit first.

Place a lozenge in your mouth and let it dissolve. This should take about half an hour. Move the lozenge about in your mouth from time to time. Do not chew or swallow the lozenge.¹⁵

In the first six weeks of use, the manufacturer recommends that you use one lozenge every one to two hours.¹⁵ Researchers found that those who used more lozenges (about 10 to 11 per day) had a better chance of quitting.^{16,24} You can also use lozenges in situations where you might be tempted to smoke.^{6,15} However, you should not use more than 15 lozenges per day.¹⁵ Do not use more than one lozenge at a time.¹⁵

After six weeks, you may then reduce the number of lozenges per day over the following weeks. The Consumer Medicine Information that comes with the lozenges will tell you how many to use.¹⁵

You should avoid eating or drinking while using a lozenge (except for water). Acidic food or drinks, such as juice, coffee, beer and soft drinks, interfere with the amount of nicotine passing through the lining of your mouth from the lozenge.¹⁵

Combination therapy

Combination therapy means using two types of nicotine products, such as the nicotine patch and nicotine lozenge, at the same time. You should talk to your doctor or pharmacist first before using combination therapy. They may recommend combination therapy if you have had cravings or not succeeded in quitting when using a single nicotine replacement product in the past.²²

Research suggests that using combination therapy increases your chances of quitting compared to using one product alone.¹

Combination therapy has been approved for the use of the 15 mg 16 hour patch or the 21 mg 24 hour patch with the 2 mg nicotine gum or 2 mg nicotine lozenge. After applying the patch to reduce withdrawal symptoms, nicotine gum or the lozenge is used to relieve cravings, which can be triggered by old smoking situations or emotions.⁶ The manufacturers recommend using at least four lozenges per day, and no more than 12 lozenges per day.^{15,22} The Consumer Medicine Information sheet that comes with the patches or lozenges will tell you how long you should use them and how to stop using them.¹⁵

'Cut down to stop' method

"Cut down to stop" is a new method whereby the nicotine lozenge, inhaler, or gum can be used while cutting down the number of cigarettes you smoke before stopping completely. This method is recommended for smokers who are not ready or unable to quit.^{25,26} If you are willing and able to suddenly stop completely using NRT, that may be a better method for you than cutting down.²⁵

The aim of the 'cut down to stop' method is to stop smoking completely. There is not enough evidence that cutting down in the long term, without ever actually quitting, has any health benefits.²⁶

The first step of the "cut down to stop" method is to start using the nicotine lozenge and cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke per day by half over six weeks. You continue to cut down with the aim of stopping completely by six months. You continue to use the nicotine lozenge until at least nine months after you started use, and you may continue to use it up to 12 months.²³ The Quitline (13 7848) can offer you advice on cutting down and provide support when you want to stop completely.

Smoking while using the nicotine inhaler, gum or lozenge does not appear to increase health risks over smoking alone.^{1,2} Research suggests that using these products alongside smoking does not increase average nicotine levels in the blood.^{6,26} There have been no reports of serious side effects from using these nicotine replacement products while smoking in studies, although in two studies nausea and vomiting was more common.^{1,6,26}

Side effects

Common side effects of the lozenge include hiccups, headache, indigestion, gas, nausea, diarrhoea, sore throat, and mouth irritation.^{15,22} The side effects of the lozenge are generally mild and usually lessen after a few days of using lozenges.^{15,22} If side effects do not fade within a few days or worry you, see your pharmacist or doctor.

Serious side effects are uncommon, and are described in the Consumer Medicine Information (pack insert) that comes with the lozenge.¹⁵ If you have these symptoms, follow the instructions in the leaflet and see a doctor as soon as possible. Do not smoke.

Safety

Using the lozenge is always safer than continuing to smoke.² The nicotine lozenge does not contain cancer-causing substances, carbon monoxide or other dangerous chemicals found in tobacco smoke. Unlike smoking, nicotine by itself has not been shown to cause cancer or heart disease.^{2,11} The lozenge does not increase the risk of heart attack in smokers who have stable heart disease.^{2,3}

It is important to store the lozenges so that children and animals cannot get them, as they can be dangerous for them.¹⁵

What do I do if I start smoking again despite using lozenges?

The surest way to successfully quit is not to smoke at all after your quit date. If you do, you greatly reduce your chances of quitting.⁵ If you slip-up and have a puff or a cigarette, don't let it lead you back to full-time smoking. Think of your reasons for quitting and what you have achieved so far. Talk to your doctor, pharmacist or call the Quitline if you want to discuss your situation.

Many smokers may not be successful at staying stopped, even when using the lozenge or other nicotine replacement products. For many people, re-adjusting to living without cigarettes is a learning process. It is common for smokers to attempt to quit a number of times before successfully staying stopped.⁸ It may take a while to figure out alternatives to cigarettes in certain situations. The purpose of the lozenge is to ease nicotine withdrawal symptoms while you deal with other aspects of quitting smoking.

If you have found the nicotine lozenge useful in quitting smoking, but have taken up smoking again, you should consider using the lozenge or another nicotine replacement product when you quit again.^{1,3}

Who can I talk to for more information?

- Your doctor is an important source of information, particularly if you have an illness, or you are taking any other medicines.
- Your pharmacist can give you advice about stopping smoking.

- Quitline 13 7848: Quitline advisors can help you with support, advice, information and a variety of resources.

Further information and resources

The QuitCoach is a free interactive website that asks you a series of questions about your smoking, and then gives you advice about quitting which is tailored to your situation. Available at <http://www.quitcoach.org.au/>.

The Quit website <http://www.quit.org.au/> provides a range of information that you can read, interact with and download. You can find out more about the Quitline or Quit courses, and you can download our order form to order extra quitting resources.

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