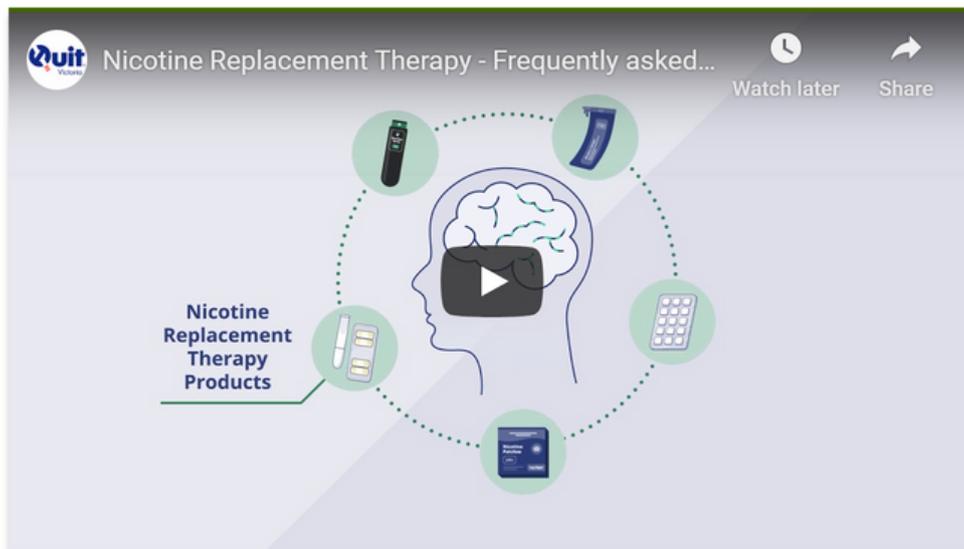


Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): frequently asked questions

There are many quitting options and methods out there. How do you decide what's best? Watch the video and read below to learn more about the different types of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): nicotine patches, gum, mouth spray, lozenges and inhalator. It's also a good idea to speak to your doctor or pharmacist before starting NRT, so they can help you work out which types will suit you best.

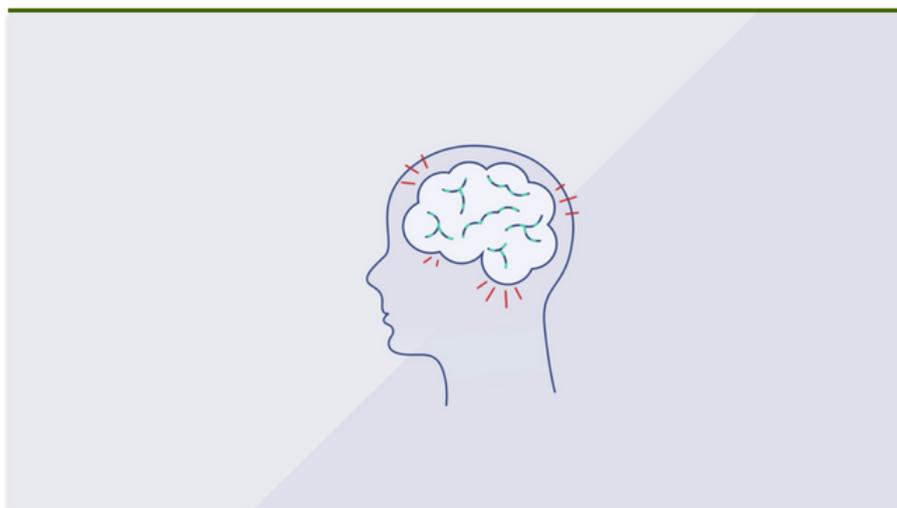


Click and watch the video to learn about NRT - what is it and how does it work?

1) How does nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) work?

As you probably know, cigarettes are highly addictive. It's because they contain a chemical called nicotine. When you puff on a cigarette, it takes just seconds for nicotine to go from the lungs to the brain.

If you have smoked for a while, your brain is filled with specific receptors that eagerly await incoming nicotine. Think of nicotine as a key, and receptors as little locks. When the nicotine unlocks the receptor, a feel-good chemical called dopamine is released, giving you a little hit or buzz. This doesn't last long. The nicotine soon fades making the receptor eager for more. Cue a cigarette craving!



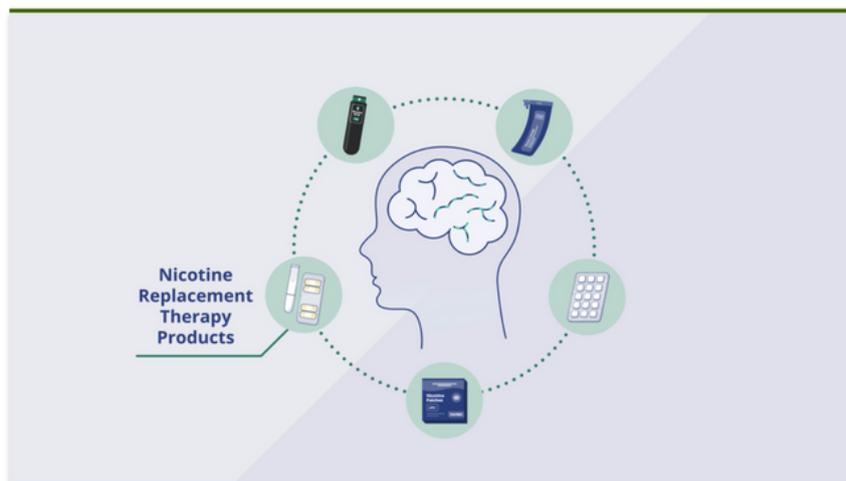
Nicotine binds to specific receptors in the brain releasing dopamine, the feel-good hormone.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): frequently asked questions

NRT provides you with nicotine, which locks on to these receptors, lessening cravings and feelings of withdrawal.

Faster-acting types of NRT, which include the [mouth spray](#), [gum](#), [lozenges](#), and [inhalator](#), gives you nicotine more quickly than nicotine patches. They can help you get past short, strong cravings, and can even be used in anticipation of a craving. Although the faster-acting types of NRT work quickly – it's important to remember they won't give you a nicotine hit as fast as cigarettes do.

Nicotine [patches](#) provide a slower, steady level of nicotine over a longer period of time.



NRT can help lessen cravings and feelings of withdrawal which you may experience when quitting smoking.

Many people who smoke will need what's called combination nicotine replacement therapy: patches PLUS a faster-acting type of NRT (mouth spray, lozenge, gum or inhalator). That way you have a steady level of nicotine for the day PLUS a bit extra at times when you would normally smoke.

It is common for people who smoke to try to quit several times before they successfully stop, even when using NRT. While NRT helps to ease nicotine withdrawal symptoms, the Quitline can help you deal with [other aspects of stopping smoking](#). If you pair NRT with a call to Quitline, you are giving yourself the best chance of successfully quitting.



Some people may prefer to use different types of faster-acting products in different situations. Speak to a Quit Specialist or your doctor for advice.

The best chance of successfully quitting smoking comes from calling Quitline, and using patches plus a faster-acting type of NRT (mouth spray, lozenge, gum or inhalator).

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): frequently asked questions

2) Can I get addicted to NRT?

Most people stop using NRT when they feel they no longer need it. The amount of nicotine in NRT is lower compared to a cigarette. It also takes longer for nicotine to get to the brain and to give you a nicotine hit. This means it's much easier to stop using NRT than it is to stop smoking. Some people may continue to use NRT for longer than recommended, possibly because they are addicted to nicotine, but this is still safer than continuing to use tobacco.

3) Is NRT safe?

The different types of NRT pass strict safety standards set by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) before they can be sold in Australia. NRT is safe to use for most people, but some types of NRT may be preferred over others in some situations. It's best to speak to your doctor or pharmacist before starting NRT, so they can help you work out which types will suit you best.

4) What about side effects?

It's very rare to get serious side effects from using NRT. Mild side effects can occur, which usually don't last long. In many cases, these side effects are caused by incorrect use of NRT. For example, it's important to ['park and chew' nicotine gum](#) as this not only makes sure it works to relieve cravings and withdrawal symptoms, but also reduces the amount of nicotine you swallow, which can upset the stomach. When it comes to the spray, it's important you point the spray under your tongue and not at the back of your throat, which can irritate your throat and give you a coughing fit.

Also, sometimes people mistake nicotine withdrawal symptoms for side effects. For example, having trouble sleeping can often be a symptom of nicotine withdrawal, but sometimes people think it is caused by NRT.

5) What happens if I have a smoke while I'm wearing a patch?

You don't need to take the patch off if you slip up and have a cigarette. It's best to leave it on. [Slip-ups](#) – a puff or a cigarette during a quit attempt – are common. It doesn't mean you should stop trying to quit. It might be a sign that you aren't using enough NRT. For example, you might need to increase how often you are using the faster-acting types of NRT. It's best to speak to your doctor or pharmacist to help you work out what dose and frequency of NRT you should be using to prevent slip-ups.

If you have returned to your previous smoking, put the patches away until you're ready to try quitting again.

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT): frequently asked questions

6) How do I access NRT?

You can buy NRT from most pharmacies, supermarkets or online. You can also get discounted nicotine patches, gum, and lozenges on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). You need to get a prescription from your doctor, which you take to your pharmacist.

Under the Closing the Gap Scheme, eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can access nicotine patches, gum and lozenges for free or for a small co-payment.

Speak to your doctor or call the [Aboriginal Quitline](#) on 13 7848 for more information.

For more information: talk to your doctor, pharmacist or [Quitline](#).

If you're thinking about quitting

If you're thinking of stopping smoking, chat with one of our qualified Quitline counsellors on 13 7848, Mon - Fri 8am - 8pm. Quitline provides non-judgemental, empathetic and tailored support to help you along your quitting journey. Quitline is a culturally inclusive service for all, including the [LGBTIQA+ community](#). We also have [Aboriginal counsellors](#) available as well as an interpreter service for people who speak languages other than English.

Please note, this information is not intended to replace consumer medicines information or health professional advice. If you would like to provide feedback, please contact quit@cancervic.org.au.