

The nicotine inhalator

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

Main points about nicotine replacement therapy products

- All forms of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products – patches, lozenges, mouth spray, gum and inhalator – have been proven to help people quit smoking.¹
- Using NRT products is always safer than continuing to smoke.² NRT products are a safe alternative to cigarettes for smokers.³
- Using NRT products will still increase your chances of quitting even if it does not completely control cravings.⁴
- NRT products reduce the severity of cravings but you may still have them, especially in situations in which you are used to smoking.⁵⁻⁷
- Combination therapy (using the patch plus another NRT product) is better at suppressing cravings than a single product.⁸ Some experts advise that most addicted smokers would benefit from using combination therapy.^{9, 10}
- NRT products work better when you also reduce triggers for cravings. Boost your chance of success by making your home smokefree and, if possible, get rid of all cigarettes in your home and car.^{11, 12} 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 products also get advice or support from their doctor, pharmacist or other trained advisor (such as through the Quitline).^{9, 13, 14}
- You will have more chance of success with the nicotine inhalator, lozenges, mouth spray or gum if you use them regularly throughout the day as well as when you have cravings.⁶
- If you slip-up and have a cigarette, it is safe to continue using NRT products and to keep trying to quit.¹⁰
- It is common for smokers to attempt to quit a number of times before they successfully stop.¹⁵

Is the nicotine inhalator suitable for me?

The nicotine inhalator works best for addicted smokers who want to quit.^{9, 13, 15} Your doctor or pharmacist can advise you whether the inhalator is suitable for you.

Signs of addiction include:

- You smoke your first cigarette within 30 minutes of waking up.^{9, 16}
- You smoke more than 10 cigarettes per day.^{9, 16} (There is no difference between smoking stronger or weaker tasting cigarettes.¹⁷)
- You suffer from withdrawal symptoms within 24 hours of stopping smoking, such as cravings, irritability, anxiety, depression, restlessness, hunger, poor concentration or sleep disturbances.^{9, 18}

It is not clear how helpful the inhalator may be smokers of 10 or less cigarettes per day, but use of a support service (such as the Quitline) and self-help materials is encouraged.^{9, 13, 15}

If you are age 12 years and over, you may use the nicotine inhalator. However if you are under 18 years you should speak to your doctor before using the inhalator.^{9, 19} It is strongly recommended that people in this age group discuss quitting smoking with a trained health advisor to benefit from using the inhalator.^{15, 20}

How does the nicotine inhalator work?

Addiction to nicotine in tobacco is the main reason why people continue to smoke. The inhalator works by replacing some of the nicotine you would normally inhale from cigarettes.²¹ It consists of a mouthpiece which attaches to a cartridge containing nicotine. When you draw air through the mouthpiece, it releases nicotine from the cartridge. You absorb the nicotine through the lining of your mouth.¹⁹

Using the inhalator can help to reduce withdrawal symptoms when you quit, such as cravings, irritability, and anxiety.²²⁻²⁵ However, it may not stop these symptoms completely.⁶ More options are listed below under *Why may I still have cravings while using the inhalator?*

Unlike nicotine patches and gum, the inhalator is designed to mimic the hand-to-mouth habit of smoking.^{22, 23} A pack-a-day smoker may bring their hand to their mouth about 200 times per day.²⁶ For some people this may be a hard habit to break. The inhalator allows you to reduce the amount of nicotine you take in and stop the hand-to-mouth habit in steps.^{6, 22}

How well does the inhalator work?

People who use the nicotine inhalator are almost twice as likely to quit and stay stopped.¹³

When using the inhalator 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, but it is several minutes slower at easing cravings than a cigarette.^{3, 20, 21, 23, 27} Over a day, inhalator users typically absorb about one-third of the dose of nicotine that they would get from smoking a pack of 20 cigarettes per day. The dose is similar to that of the 2 mg gum.²⁰ Therefore, more highly addicted smokers may find higher dosage nicotine products, such as the 4 mg gum or lozenge, more suitable.

Buying the inhalator

You can buy the nicotine inhalator from pharmacies without a prescription. It is menthol flavoured.¹⁹ The inhalator is sold in two different packages. The inhalator start pack includes the mouthpiece and four cartridges, and costs about \$14. The larger pack contains 20 cartridges and two mouthpieces, and costs about \$52, as at September 2017. Pharmacy prices can be a few dollars higher or lower.

What do I need to tell my pharmacist or doctor?

Before buying the inhalator, 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 inhalator may not be suitable. Please check the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) that comes with the inhalator for the latest list of common medicines and medical conditions that may be affected by using the inhalator or stopping smoking.

Illnesses listed in the CMI for which you may need medical advice include: asthma, throat disease, heart disease, any blood circulation disorder, kidney disease, liver disease, stomach ulcer or pain, hyperthyroidism, diabetes, and phaeochromocytoma (a tumour of the adrenal gland).^{19, 20}

Can I use the inhalator if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, it is recommended that you first try to quit without medication.^{15, 20} However, if you are unable to quit without medication, you may use the inhalator to help you quit.⁹ While using the inhalator is considered safer than smoking, even this smaller amount of nicotine may not be entirely risk-free for your baby. You 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, 28} Mothers using the inhalator should breastfeed their baby first, then use the inhalator soon after. This allows time for the nicotine in their breastmilk to decrease before the next feed.^{19, 29} If you have any questions regarding these issues, please ask your doctor.

Using the inhalator

Problems to avoid

You should avoid eating and drinking 15 minutes before, and during, use of the inhalator (except for water).¹⁹ Acidic foods or drinks, such as orange juice, coffee, beer and soft drink, interfere with the amount of nicotine passing through the lining of your mouth from the inhalator.¹⁹

Air temperature affects the amount of nicotine you get from the inhalator. In warmer weather the inhalator delivers larger amounts of nicotine, and smaller amounts in cooler weather.²⁰ In very cold temperatures, you may not get enough nicotine. The inhalator works best in temperatures over 15°C.²²

When to start use

Once you've bought the inhalator, you should set a quit date. On your quit day, start using the inhalator when you'd normally have your first cigarette in the morning or soon after your last cigarette – don't wait for cravings to hit first.

How to use and how much to use

After putting a nicotine cartridge in the inhalator, you draw a breath through the mouthpiece to absorb the nicotine through the lining of your mouth. You can either take shallow sucking breaths close together or slower deeper breaths that more closely mimic cigarette smoking.^{20, 22} You will get a similar amount of nicotine either way.^{22, 25} Nicotine is absorbed more slowly through your mouth than the lung and will not reach your brain as quickly as it would if you were smoking.^{20, 23} So the inhalator is **not** like smoking in terms of getting a fast 'hit' of nicotine.¹⁹

Each deep "puff" on the inhalator gives you much less nicotine than a puff from a cigarette. To substitute for one cigarette puff, you need to take about eight to ten inhalator puffs. Each cartridge substitutes about seven cigarettes.²⁰ No more than six cartridges should be used within 24 hours.²⁰

The inhalator works better when used regularly.⁶ You can use it as often as you would normally have a cigarette, or more if needed.²⁰ If you do not use the inhalator often enough or for long enough, you may not get enough nicotine to reduce withdrawal symptoms.⁶

The product information recommends use for at least 12 weeks, then reduce the number of sessions per day for another six to eight weeks.²⁰ Use beyond 12 months is generally not recommended, but some people may need to use it for longer to avoid returning to smoking.²⁰

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

Why may I still having cravings while using the inhalator?

You may still have cravings while using the inhalator because:

- You may not be using it properly. Read the above section *Using the inhalator* and the product information to avoid common problems.
- You may not be getting enough nicotine from the inhalator. If your cravings are bad and do not lessen within 20 minutes of starting use of the inhalator, you could consider other options.²⁰ These include using a higher dose nicotine product, or using combination therapy. Speak to your pharmacist or doctor, if you think this is a likely cause of your cravings.
- You 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:³⁰

- **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 these situations. People most successful at resisting urges to smoke use a range of coping strategies to help them.³⁰ Making your home smokefree, avoiding trigger situations where possible in the first few weeks, and getting rid of cigarettes in your home and car are all helpful strategies.^{11, 12, 31} Information, advice or support is available for the cost of a local call from the Quitline 13 7848.

Using combination therapy

Combination therapy means using two types of nicotine products, such as the nicotine patch and nicotine inhalator, 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 therapy product in the past.²⁰

Evidence suggests that using combination therapy increases your chances of quitting compared to using one product alone,¹³ and that it is better at suppressing cravings.⁸ Some experts advise that most addicted smokers would benefit from using combination therapy.^{9, 10} Research suggests that suppressing cravings on your quit date in particular may increase the chance of success.^{8, 32} However, living in a smoky home and having quick and easy access to cigarettes can work against you,¹¹ even when you use combination therapy.¹²

Combination therapy has been approved for the use of:

- the 25 mg or 15 mg 16 hour patch, or the 21 mg 24 hour patch *with*
- the nicotine inhalator, 2 mg nicotine lozenge, 1.5 mg mini lozenge, mouth spray, or 2 mg nicotine gum.^{33, 34}

After applying the patch to reduce withdrawal symptoms, the inhalator is used to relieve cravings, which can be triggered by old smoking situations or emotions.^{6, 19}

The Consumer Medicine Information sheet that comes with the patches or inhalator will tell you how long you should use them and how to stop using them.¹⁹

Nicotine patches are available with a doctor's prescription through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), making them much cheaper. For more information, read *Fact Sheet: Nicotine patches*.

Using the nicotine inhalator to cut down, then quit

You can use the nicotine inhalator, mouth spray, lozenge, mini lozenge or gum 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.^{35, 36}

The aim of this method is to stop smoking completely. There is no evidence that cutting down, without ever actually quitting, has any health benefits in the long term.³⁶

The first step is to start using the nicotine inhalator, and cut down the number of cigarettes you smoke per day by half over six weeks. You should not use more than six cartridges in a day.²⁰ Somewhere between six weeks to six months (preferably as soon as possible), you stop smoking cigarettes altogether. You then continue to use the inhalator in the same way as people who have just stopped smoking suddenly (refer to *Using the inhalator* above).²⁰ 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 inhalator does not appear to increase health risks over smoking alone.^{2, 13, 36} If you reduce your smoking while using the inhalator, your nicotine blood levels are likely to be no higher than when you were smoking only.

There have been no reports of serious side effects from using the inhalator while smoking in studies.^{36, 37} However, some people using the inhalator may have side effects (described below).

If you are not ready to quit, the 'cut down then quit' method used with a support service will increase your chance of quitting in the long term.^{35, 38} But if you are ready to quit, using a nicotine replacement therapy product to stop smoking completely offers a better chance of success at quitting than the cut down method.³⁹

Side effects of the nicotine inhalator

Common side effects of the inhalator include a burning sensation in the mouth and throat, and coughing. Sometimes users may have a running nose, headache, nausea, heartburn, or hiccups.^{20, 23} Medical guidelines rate these reactions as mild.^{20, 23} If side effects do not fade within a week or two, or they worry you, see your pharmacist or doctor.

Serious side effects are rare,⁴⁰ and are described in the Consumer Medicine Information (pack insert) that comes with the inhalator.¹⁹ If you have these symptoms, follow the instructions in the leaflet and see a doctor as soon as possible. These symptoms can occur from absorbing too much nicotine, so do not smoke.

Safety of the nicotine inhalator

Using the nicotine inhalator is always safer than continuing to smoke. Tobacco smoke contains many cancer-causing substances, carbon monoxide and other dangerous chemicals, which the nicotine inhalator does not.² Unlike smoking, nicotine is not a major cause of increased risk for heart disease or cancer.^{2, 41-43} The inhalator does not increase the risk of heart attack if you have heart disease.^{2, 41}

It is important to store and dispose of the cartridges so that children and animals cannot get them, as they can be dangerous for them.¹⁹

What do I do if I start smoking again despite using the inhalator?

If you slip-up and have a puff or a cigarette, don't let it lead you back to full-time smoking. It is safe to keep using the inhalator and re-commit to stopping smoking.⁶ Think of your reasons for quitting and what you have achieved so far. Call the Quitline if you want to discuss your smoking.

Think about getting some extra help if you are trying to stop smoking using the inhalator and:

- you are smoking a similar number of cigarettes as usual and you feel you're not making progress towards stopping, or
- you are still smoking after using the inhalator for three months, even if it's just now and then.¹⁰

Your doctor or the Quitline can help you address what's stopping you from quitting and discuss further options.

It is common for smokers to attempt to quit a number of times before successfully staying stopped, even when using the inhalator or other nicotine replacement therapy products.¹⁵ For many people, re-adjusting to living without cigarettes is a learning process. It may take a while to figure out alternatives to cigarettes in certain situations. The purpose of the inhalator is to ease nicotine withdrawal symptoms while you deal with other aspects of quitting smoking.⁶

If you have found the nicotine inhalator useful in quitting smoking, but have taken up smoking again, you should consider using the inhalator or another nicotine replacement therapy product when you quit again.^{3, 13}

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, whether you have already quit or are just thinking about it.

Online resources

The **Quit website** 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, QuitCoach and QuitTxt.

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. To find out more go to www.quitcoach.org.au.

QuitTxt provides regular SMS messages including tips and encouragement to help you keep on track throughout your quit attempt. To begin, all you need to do is register and complete a brief questionnaire at www.quit.org.au/quittxt.

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