

People smoke because the nicotine in tobacco is very addictive! However as we all know, continual exposure to all of the other chemicals in the tobacco smoke can cause other health conditions such as heart disease, lung cancer, emphysema and bronchitis. If you're a heavy smoker or been smoking for a long time, Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is a good option to consider. Clinical trials show it may increase your chances of quitting by 50-70% compared to unassisted quitting – well worth a try. This information leaflet will explain how NRT works and provide you with lifestyle tips to help assist you in being SUCCESSFUL in your attempt to quit smoking.

Who should use NRT?

- **Generally, NRT is of the most help to people who smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day.**
- **Is it safe for under-18s?** Yes—NRT is safe, however not yet been proven to improve quit rates in adolescents. However, please note it is NOT recommended for under-12s. Consult your pharmacist!
- **What if I am pregnant and wanting to quit smoking—can I use NRT?** Yes—NRT use is better than smoking for pregnant women and is an option; however, it is always best for you to quit without NRT if possible. Consult your pharmacist!
- **What if I am breastfeeding—can I use NRT then?** Yes—NRT use is certainly preferable to smoking whilst breastfeeding, as it has been shown that environmental tobacco smoke is of much greater risk to the baby than NRT.
- **What if I have other medical conditions or take regular medication?** You should always consult your pharmacist in this situation; however, here are some quick facts for your information:
 - NRT is well tolerated by people with mental illness who want to quit smoking.
 - Diabetics may need to monitor their blood sugar more closely, as nicotine does affect insulin.
 - Chemicals in tobacco smoke do indirectly affect blood levels of some psychiatric medications—the use of NRT with these medicines should be conducted with consultation from the patient's doctor/specialist so that any necessary dose reductions may be made.

Types of NRT—there are 6 different types of Nicotine Replacement Therapy available in Australia:

- Patches
- Chewing Gum
- Quick mist
- Lozenges
- Sublingual tablets
- Inhalers

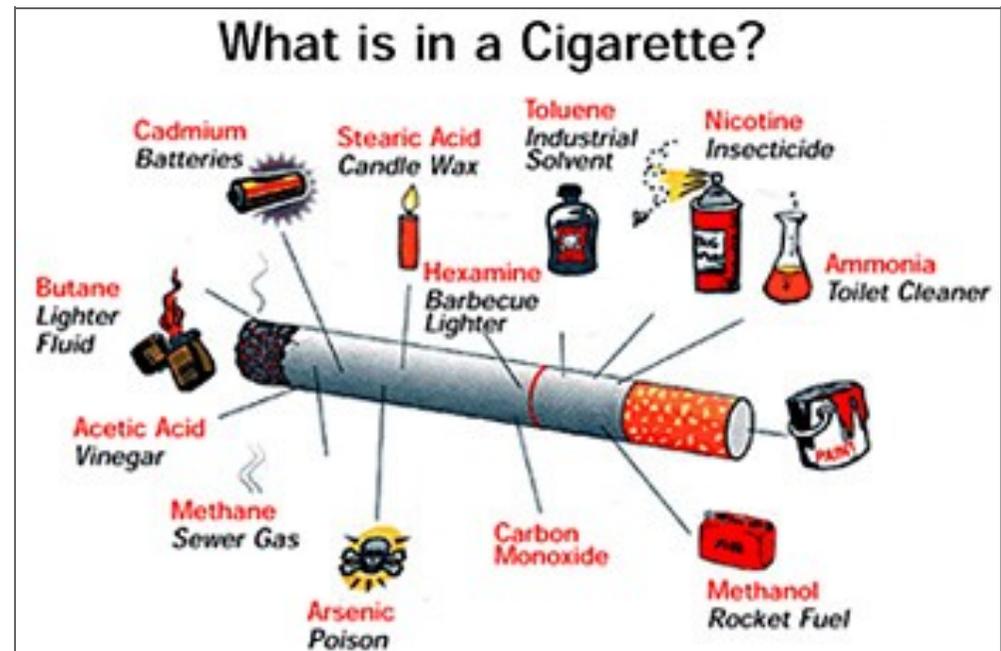
We will cover each of these methods in detail later in the module!

Benefits of NRT

So why should I use NRT? What makes it any better than smoking a cigarette?! And isn't it better to just quit "cold turkey?"

The main benefit of NRT is that it prevents cravings in a smoker whilst allowing them to abstain from tobacco; therefore.....

- *You will not be inhaling all of the poisonous gases and chemicals that are usually found in nasty cigarette smoke!!*
- *You will be using a product far less addictive than cigarettes, as less nicotine is absorbed into your body at a slower rate than with smoking!*
- *You will be able to reduce your body's daily intake of nicotine gradually, by reducing the NRT dose over several months!*
- *Your withdrawal from nicotine will be reduced, making it much easier to quit that just simply going "cold turkey!"*



Treatment Options

Patches

Patches provide a sustained release of nicotine into the blood stream over the day and generally suit people if their need to smoke is constant across the day. It is also a very discrete method of NRT and may be conducted privately, not necessarily with anyone else's knowledge. Once applied to the skin, nicotine begins to be absorbed; however, it may take a few hours for the patch to build up to an effective dose. As a general rule, if you smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day and weigh more than 45kg, you would start on "Step 1" of the patches (21mg/24hrs or 15mg/16hrs). If you smoke less than 10 cigarettes a day or weigh less than 45kg, you could start on "Step 2" of the patches (14mg/24hrs or 10mg/16hrs).

Helpful tips:

- The patch should be applied to a non-hairy, clean, dry place on the upper body or outer part of the upper arm. Use a different place each day to avoid irritation from the adhesive in the patch.
- Applying before bed-time is often a good tactic for smokers who usually have a cigarette when they first get up in the morning; this is because the nicotine in your body will slowly build up through the night up to its therapeutic dose before awakening.
- Patches worn for 16hrs/day are as effective as those worn for 24hrs/day. Usually the 24 hour patch is recommended in those that smoke shortly after waking, but if disturbance in sleep or vivid dreams occur, a 16-hour release patch may be preferred.
- If you are experiencing adverse effects such as nausea, consider trying a lower strength patch—consult your pharmacist!
- Other possible side effects include skin reaction/rash and pain in the upper arm.



Gum

NRT gum releases nicotine as the gum is chewed, thus giving you nicotine when you crave it, without maintaining the dose like patches. It is available in 2 strengths; 2mg gum for lighter smokers who smoke more than 10 a day but less than 20/day. 4mg gum is reserved for those smoking more than 20/day.

Helpful tips:

- It is essential to chew the gum slowly until you feel a tingling or a bitter taste; the gum then needs to be parked between the cheek and upper gum until tingling subsides, then chew again. Each piece of gum will last approximately 30 minutes (at which time you will no longer feel any tingling).
- Excessive chewing may cause salivation, leading to indigestion—remember to chew slowly!
- NRT gum is not suitable for people with dentures or other complicated dental work.
- Side effects may include jaw pain, hiccups and nausea.



QuickMist

Nicorette QuickMist is sprayed into the mouth and provides fast relief from cravings, as the nicotine is absorbed quickly into the blood stream through the mouth lining

Helpful tips:

- Point the nozzle towards the inside of the cheek or under and tongue and spray as closely as possible
- Try to avoid the lips when spraying the mist
- Try not to swallow for a few seconds after spraying to maximise absorption
- Use one spray first and if your cravings do not disappear within a few minutes use the second spray. If 2 sprays are required, future doses may be delivered as 2 consecutive sprays. For most smokers this means about 1 or 2 sprays every 30 minutes to 1 hour. The maximum dose is 2 sprays at a time, 4 sprays per hour for 16hrs or 64 sprays per day
- Side effects may include tingling lips, a strong taste and hiccups



Treatment Options

Lozenges

NRT lozenges are similar to gum in that they give you nicotine just when you crave/need it. These lozenges come in 3 different strengths: 1.5mg and 4mg in the mini-lozenge, and 2mg and 4mg in regular lozenges.

Helpful tips:

- These lozenges should be dissolved slowly in the mouth and not chewed or swallowed. Larger lozenges take about 30 minutes to dissolve and mini lozenges take about 10 minutes to dissolve.
- To dissolve these lozenges effectively, move them from one side of the mouth to the other.
- Side effects may include hiccups, heartburn and nausea



Sublingual Tablets

Sublingual tablets are another NRT method that allows you to get your "nicotine hit" just when you crave/need it. They come in only one strength (2mg) and the general recommendation is 1 lozenge used every 1-2 hours in low dependence and 2 lozenges used every 1-2 hours in high dependence.

Helpful tips:

- When you feel like you need to smoke a cigarette you place one nicotine microtab under the tongue and let it dissolve slowly. As the tablet starts to dissolve, nicotine is released and is absorbed into the body through the lining of the mouth.
- It is important that you let the tablet dissolve slowly, which takes about 20 - 30 minutes, and that you do not swallow, suck or chew it. This would make the microtab ineffective.
- Side effects may include headache, nausea, indigestion, hiccups, coughing and dry mouth



Inhaler

The nicotine "inhaler" is the last of the NRT products that may be used just when you crave/need it. The inhaler is actually a plastic cylinder containing a cartridge that releases nicotine when you inhale it. The nicotine is then absorbed into the body, but interestingly through the mouth, not the lungs.

Helpful tips:

- This method of NRT is an often preferred method for smokers missing not only the nicotine, but also the "habit" of smoking, as it mimics the activity of smoking a cigarette quite closely (i.e. the hand-to-mouth action).
- One cartridge last for approximately 20-30 minutes and does not have to be used fully in one session; however, it is not advisable to leave it more than 1 hour.
- Side effects may include coughing, headache, nausea, heartburn, hiccups and throat irritation



Lifestyle Advice for Quitting Smoking

- Quitting smoking is such a personal thing, so it is important for you to feel comfortable in how you are going about this life-changing process. Try and ensure you are totally comfortable with the method(s) your pharmacy have chosen for you. 3 of the most common methods for quitting using NRT include:
 - Stopping smoking abruptly and using 1 form of NRT to control cravings
 - Stopping smoking abruptly and use a combination of 2 NRT products (patches plus gum, microtab or lozenges) to control cravings
 - Stopping smoking gradually by using 1 form of NRT to help REDUCE the number of cigarettes smoked daily whilst preparing to quit
- Try to fit in a moderate amount of exercise into your week (30 minutes on all/ most days of the week)
- Eat regular healthy meals, making sure you include plenty of fruit, vegetables and grains. Try to limit foods high in fat, sugar or salt
- Limit your alcohol intake—it is important not to replace your smoking with drinking!
- Join a support group to help enable you to overcome the emotional and psychological dependence on smoking.
 - Quitline is a telephone service available to smokers who want to quit. You can call Quitline on 137848 from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call (except for mobile phones—normal charges apply).
- Try to stay positive and motivated about quitting. A person may quit a number of times before they stop for good, and that is ok. Try to think of previous attempts to quit as practice. Learn from past attempts—think about what worked for you and put that into practice during THIS next attempt. Also think about what might have brought you back to smoking again and how you might deal with this next time.
- Switching to “lighter” or “weaker” cigarettes is not necessarily any less dangerous for the body. Research shows there is little difference in the levels of nicotine, carbon monoxide and other toxins inhaled by smokers of weaker cigarettes compared to smokers of regular cigarettes.
- Filters are used to reduce the amount of smoke inhaled from each cigarette. However, some smokers may make up for the drop in nicotine by inhaling the smoke more deeply or smoking more cigarettes! There is not enough evidence to recommend these products for quitting.
- Remember that your quitting success rate may improve by avoiding situations which tempt you to smoke; e.g. Being with friends who smoke, being in a stressful/frustrating situation, drinking alcohol, or at coffee breaks.
- If NRT is not working for you, please talk to your pharmacist—they will ensure the treatment regimen is being followed correctly. They can also advise on other methods for quitting; e.g. Prescription medicines like Zyban or Champix.

