

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

NicoDerm CQ, Habitrol, Nicorette, Nicotrol NS, Nicotrol Inhaler, clean nicotine, given as a patch, gum, lozenge, inhaler, or spray

These give your body nicotine without the smoke, so withdrawal eases while you break the habit of smoking.

WHAT IT TREATS

Quitting smoking

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Patch daily, gum as needed

WHEN IT WORKS

Gum works in 5-10 minutes

HABIT FORMING

Far less than cigarettes

✔ This medicine carries **no special FDA safety warning** of that kind.

1 WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- Nicotine is what your body misses. The tar and smoke are what harm you. These products give one without the other.
- The **patch** gives a steady background level all day. The gum, lozenge, inhaler, and spray handle cravings as they hit.
- Using a patch plus one fast-acting form works better than either alone, and it is safe to use both together.
- Most are sold without a prescription, so you can start today. Ask the pharmacist which strength fits how much you smoke.

2 HOW TO TAKE IT

- Put the patch on clean, dry, hairless skin each morning and pick a different spot daily to avoid irritation.
- Chew the gum slowly until it tingles or tastes peppery, then park it between your cheek and gum until the taste fades.
- Do not eat or drink for **15 minutes** before or while using gum or a lozenge. Coffee, juice, and soda block absorption.
- Let a lozenge dissolve on its own. Do not chew or swallow it, because that sends the nicotine to your stomach instead.
- Keep every form well out of reach of children and pets. A patch or a piece of gum can seriously harm a small child.

3 WHAT TO EXPECT

- The patch takes a few hours to reach a steady level, so put the first one on the morning of your quit day.
- Gum, lozenges, and the spray work within **5 to 10 minutes**, which is about how long a strong craving lasts anyway.
- A usual course is **8 to 12 weeks**, stepping down in strength. Using it longer is far safer than going back to smoking.
- If you still crave constantly, you are probably underusing it. Most people use too little, not too much.
- A slip is not a failure. Keep using the medicine, and treat the slip as information about what triggers you.

4 COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Skin redness or itching under the patch is common. Rotating sites and a dab of hydrocortisone cream usually handle it.
- Vivid dreams or restless sleep can come from wearing the patch overnight. Taking it off at bedtime usually fixes that.
- Sore jaw, hiccups, or an upset stomach from gum almost always means chewing too fast. Slow down and park it.
- Mouth or throat soreness from lozenges and the inhaler is common early and usually settles within a week.
- The nasal spray stings and makes your eyes water for the first days. Most people get used to it within a week.
- Headache, nausea, or a racing heart can mean too much nicotine at once. Use less of the fast-acting form and check in.

5 CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Call **911** for chest pain, a pounding irregular heartbeat, or trouble breathing.
- Call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** if a child swallows gum or touches a patch.
- Call your prescriber for a patch rash that blisters, spreads, or will not settle.
- Call **988** if quitting leaves you with thoughts of ending your life.

6 WHAT TO AVOID

- Do not smoke while wearing a patch without checking first. Most people can, but it should be a plan, not an accident.
- Acidic drinks such as coffee, soda, and juice block gum and lozenges. Wait a quarter of an hour after finishing one.
- Tell your prescriber about recent chest pain, a recent heart attack, or an irregular heartbeat before you start.
- If you are pregnant, talk it through first. Quitting matters enormously, and the safest approach can be planned with you.
- Do not use more than the package says without asking. Too much nicotine causes nausea, dizziness, and a racing heart.

7 STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Step down in strength on the schedule on the package rather than stopping all at once, and expect it to take weeks.
- If cravings surge as you step down, hold at the current strength longer instead of quitting the product entirely.
- Staying on gum or lozenges for months is not a problem. It is far safer than any return to cigarettes.
- Free coaching is available at **1-800-QUIT-NOW**, and using it alongside these products roughly doubles your odds.

8 QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Which strength of patch matches how much I smoke now?
- Should I combine the patch with gum, lozenges, or the spray?
- Is it safe for me to keep the patch on through the night?
- How long should I stay on this before stepping down?

Where this information comes from

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NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.