



Pharmacotherapy: Your Patients' Best Chance to Become Tobacco-Free



Tobacco Cessation Clinic Enhancement Program
Toolkit Series

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
Cancer Center
Making Cancer History®

Pharmacotherapy: Your Patients' Best Chance to Become Tobacco-Free

Medication in addition to behavioral counseling is essential for successful abstinence from tobacco. A meta-analysis of 83 studies found that combining tobacco treatment medications with counseling approximately doubles the chance of successfully quitting.

Why is nicotine addictive?

- Nicotine stimulates the body and brain, increasing arousal, improving task performance, relieving anxiety and increasing metabolic rate.
- Patients who try to quit smoking not only have to change their long-term compulsive behavior of smoking, but also adjust their perception of the benefits of smoking, so these benefits seem very small in contrast to the risks of continued smoking.
- Nicotine is highly addictive. It is comparable to heroin, cocaine and alcohol because, like these substances, it induces long-term biological changes to the brain that are very difficult to undo.
- Most withdrawal symptoms from nicotine occur within one or two days, peak during the first week, and generally subside within two to four weeks.

Pharmacotherapy treatments provide patients with medication(s) to treat the biologic addiction and reduce the intensity of withdrawal symptoms. Pharmacotherapy treatments for nicotine dependence include nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) and non-nicotine-based medications, such as Bupropion and Varenicline. Several NRT products are available over the counter while the other products will need a doctor's prescription.

Types of Nicotine Replacement Therapy (N.R.T.)



Transdermal Patch

A small patch that is applied once a day to the skin anywhere on the upper body. This is designed to deliver a steady dose of nicotine through the body. Patches may contain latex.



Gum

Gum releases nicotine into your system and helps to relieve withdrawal if used regularly — at least eight pieces per day. Gum begins to work within five to 10 minutes and comes in different flavors and two doses.



Lozenge

Candy-like pieces that will release nicotine into your system and are best used for a quick fix of nicotine. When used regularly — at least eight pieces per day, they will take effect in five to 10 minutes and fully dissolve within 20 – 30 minutes.



Nasal Spray

Nasal sprays are similar in size and shape to allergy or congestion nasal sprays but should not be inhaled into your sinus cavities. When you let the spray sit in your nostril, a quick burst of nicotine gets absorbed into your bloodstream that helps with withdrawals for anyone with cravings.



Inhaler

A plastic tube around the size and shape of a pen. Using it is similar to puffing on a cigarette but without inhaling. The inhaler releases nicotine slowly into the mouth and then into the bloodstream.

Types of Non-nicotine-based Medication



Bupropion

A prescription medication in pill form that blocks nicotine receptors in the brain to reduce cravings. Also known as Zyban or Wellbutrin.



Varenicline

A prescription medication in pill form that cuts cravings by blocking receptors in the brain while stimulating them in a milder form. This means smoking is not as urgently needed and when a person does smoke it would not be satisfying. Also known as Chantix.

Pharmacotherapy + Patient Therapy = The Most Effective Formula for Quit Success

Use of these products in combination with counseling will increase the chances of a successful quit attempt. Becoming trained as a Tobacco Treatment Specialist will ensure you know how to properly prescribe or recommend these medications with the correct dosage based on the patients' medical history. More information can be found on our website: [Quit Smoking: 7 Products to strike out nicotine.](#)

