



Ask The Pharmacist

Making It Easier To Quit Smoking

by Lisa Chavis, RPh

(NAPSA)—Cigarettes kill an estimated 440,000 Americans each year and are a major cause of lung cancer, heart disease, bronchitis, emphysema and stroke. While kicking the habit can be difficult, more than 3 million Americans do quit every year.



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The use of nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) can be an effective way to quit. They provide a measured dose of nicotine

to help ease physical withdrawal symptoms. NRTs are most effective when used in combination with behavioral change programs.

Below are various types of nicotine replacement therapies available as FDA-approved over-the-counter products. Before starting any cessation regimen, consult your doctor or pharmacist.

Nicotine patch: The patch is applied to your skin and delivers small, controlled doses of nicotine into the bloodstream. Some forms are also available by prescription.

Nicotine gum: Nicotine gum contains enough nicotine to reduce the urge to smoke. Because it takes longer for the chemical to reach the brain, its effect is less intense.

Nicotine lozenges: These are hard candies that release nicotine as they dissolve. Users reduce the number of lozenges until they are nicotine-free.

The following are NRTs available by prescription only.

Nicotine inhaler: These cigarette-like devices let you inhale nicotine while providing substantially less than a real cigarette.



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Nicotine nasal spray: The nicotine is sprayed into the nostrils, where it is rapidly absorbed. The spray delivers a nicotine hit much faster than any other NRT.

Research has shown that smokers who use nicotine replacement therapy products and participate in a behavioral change program can double their chances of quitting. Nicotine-free cessation aids have also been effective.

Bupropion and Varenicline: Bupropion is an antidepressant drug that dramatically reduces nicotine's physical withdrawal symptoms. Varenicline is a prescription drug that can partially activate nicotine receptors in the brain, reducing a person's craving.

Hypnosis: Hypnosis puts people into an altered state of mind where they become more susceptible to suggestion.

For more information, visit www.medco.com.

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