

Commit To **QUIT**

Products, Changes In Routine Help Kick The Smoking Habit

(NAPSA)—Kicking the smoking habit can be a drag, but a personal commitment to success, supported by smoking-cessation products and a change in routine, can help make the deadly habit go up in smoke.

Smoking is addictive on both a physical and a psychological level. Once hooked, your body craves the nicotine a cigarette delivers and undergoes withdrawal symptoms when the addictive substance is eliminated. Psychologically, you fall into the habit of smoking when performing certain tasks or at particular times during the day. For many, overcoming the physical and psychological challenges can be daunting.

"To have a chance at being successful, you need to set a quit date and have a plan to reach that goal," said Rite Aid Pharmacist Sarah Matunis, R.Ph. "Throw out the cigarettes, seek the support of your friends and family and make changes in your daily routine so you're not tempted to smoke. If you're used to smoking after dinner, go for a walk instead. If you usually smoke in the car, take a different route so you're forced to think of something other than the cigarette you're craving."

Helping eliminate those physical cravings are numerous products that deliver nicotine to the body, but do not contain the more than 4,000 chemicals found in cigarette smoke. These chemicals are what cause the serious health problems associated with smoking, including lung disease, cancer and heart problems.



Pharmacies offer a number of products to help people quit smoking. Some are available over the counter, while others require a prescription.

"The idea behind nicotine replacement therapy is to slowly wean yourself from the substance so your cravings for cigarettes will eventually disappear," said Matunis. "Cravings will be most intense two to three days after quitting. A nicotine replacement product will help eliminate those cravings and keep you on target after your quit date. It's important that you never smoke while using these products since this could lead to a nicotine overdose."

You have four choices for nicotine replacement therapy—gum, patches, nasal spray and an inhaler—and all are considered equally effective. Another smoking-cessation product available only through a prescription is Zyban®, the first nicotine-free pill that can help reduce your urge to smoke.

Nicotine gum is available without a prescription at your local pharmacy. The number of pieces

you chew in a day and the amount of nicotine in each dose is linked to how often you smoked. The goal is to work down to a lower nicotine level and to decrease your daily amount of gum.

The patch, which is also available over-the-counter, is placed on your arm in the morning and removed at night. As the weeks progress, you step down the nicotine level until the cravings are eliminated. The nasal spray and inhaler are only available with a prescription and perform a similar function to the gum and patch.

"Which product you choose comes down to your personal preference," said Matunis. "Your doctor and pharmacist can help you in your selection and also provide information on local smoking-cessation resources. At Rite Aid, many of our pharmacists are even smoking-cessation specialists who can provide one-on-one counseling and group sessions."

Matunis adds that Rite Aid's Web site at www.riteaid.com provides information on smoking-cessation products. Simply go to Our Pharmacy, select Drug Information and enter a specific smoking-cessation product. You can also e-mail your question by selecting Ask the Pharmacist.

"With any of these products, you can either succeed or fail," said Matunis. "It comes down to how committed you are to quitting."

For more information on smoking cessation or to find the location of the nearest Rite Aid pharmacist, go to www.riteaid.com.