



Yukon
Health and Social Services

Quitpack News is published monthly by:

Health Promotion Unit
Government of Yukon
#2 Hospital Road
Whitehorse, Yukon
Y1A 3H8
Tel: (867) 667-8392
Fax: (867) 667-8338
Toll Free:
1-866-221-8393
Email:
health.promotion@gov.yk.ca

Don't forget !

Your chances of quitting are best when you combine nicotine replacement therapy with a complete smoking cessation program that includes setting a quit date, having a plan in place for dealing with smoking triggers, and getting support from a doctor, pharmacist, friend or family member.

QuitPack News

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Many of you have asked for more information on smoking cessation aides that could help you become smoke-free. This month's newsletter will give you an overview on what's out there, what works, and what to keep in mind when choosing a therapy to help you quit.

Nicotine Replacement Therapies

More than 70% of smokers would like to quit smoking. Using some form of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) doubles the chances of being successful. Nicotine replacement therapy works because it replaces cigarettes as a source of the nicotine that your body craves. In the early days of quitting, NRTs reduce withdrawal symptoms and cravings. As you learn alternatives to lighting up and start to break the psychological links to smoking, the dose of NRT is gradually reduced so that you are no longer dependent on nicotine.

All forms of nicotine replacement products appear to be equally effective, and all forms are safe when used properly. Nicotine by itself is not nearly as harmful as the other chemicals in cigarettes. Tars, carbon monoxide, and other toxic chemicals in tobacco cause most of the harmful effects, not the nicotine.

There are several types of NRT. No matter which one you choose, it is important that you ***do not smoke*** while you are on nicotine replacement therapy. If you smoke and use nicotine replacement products at the same time, you may overdose on nicotine, and experience headaches, nausea, confusion, and vomiting. If you think you have overdosed, call your doctor right away.

Interested in NRT? Things to consider

Some NRTs require a doctor's prescription; others are available over-the-counter at a drug store. Whether or not a prescription is required, ***every smoker*** who considers Nicotine Replacement Therapy should speak with their doctor or pharmacist ***before*** starting any treatment. A physician or pharmacist can help find the dose of NRT that will work best for you.

The initial dose and the length of time you will use NRTs depends on a number of factors such as your weight, number of cigarettes you smoke, and whether you have certain medical conditions. Contrary to popular belief, NRTs are an option for smokers who are pregnant, have heart disease, or are under 18 years old.

Remember that you may cough more during the first week after you quit. Coughing is not a symptom of withdrawal from nicotine - coughing is your body's way of clearing your lungs. This happens whether you use nicotine replacement therapy or not.

Common Side effects

Since all NRTs appear to work equally well, many smokers choose an NRT based on how easy it is to use and the possible side effects. All forms of nicotine replacement have some side effects, although they are different for different types of NRTs. The side effects are usually minor - very few people (less than 5%) have to stop using a nicotine replacement product because of side effects. When the NRTs are used properly, side effects should disappear within two weeks, but please talk to your doctor or pharmacist if the side effects persist for more than two weeks or you have any other concerns.

Smokers report that the most troubling side effect is insomnia with or without wild dreams. This is especially common when using the 24-hour nicotine patch. Sleep is disturbed because your brain isn't used to getting nicotine when you are sleeping (though some smokers wish they could smoke in their sleep!). You can reduce the effects on your sleep by removing the patch after 8 p.m. If you still experience sleep problems, then talk with your doctor.

A common mistake smokers make when they experience side effects is to abruptly stop using nicotine replacement therapy. Suddenly stopping NRT is like going cold turkey, and can lead to some of the same withdrawal symptoms that occur when you stop smoking cigarettes. This puts you at risk for a relapse.





Buyers Beware!

Not all products that promise help for smokers

live up to their claims. One such product is “*Nic-Out*” filters. The



manufacturer claims that it helps smokers by reducing the tar, nicotine and carcinogens taken in from cigarettes by 90%. This sounds very encouraging, especially to smokers, who can't give up smoking entirely. Although these filters do reduce tar, they do not reduce the amount of nicotine or cancer-causing chemicals in cigarette smoke.

Type of NRT		Availability?	Can dose be adjusted	Minimum /Maximum Dose	How quickly does it work?	How is it used?	Common Side Effects
Nicotine Patch		Over-the-Counter	No	1 daily or as directed by physician	1-3 hours	Place patch on upper body	Topical skin rash, insomnia
Nicotine Gum		Over-the-Counter	Yes	9-20 daily or as directed by physician	7-10 mins	Chew as needed	mouth/throat soreness; hiccups; upset stomach/heartburn; jaw pain
Nicotine Inhaler		Over-the-Counter	Yes	6-16 daily or as directed by physician	5 mins	Breathe in	cough; scratchy throat; upset stomach
Nasal Spray		Prescription	Yes	13-20 daily or as directed by physician	10-15 mins	Spray up the nose	nose/throat irritation; runny nose; dizziness

For more information visit the Yukon Health Guide website: www.ykhealthguide.org

Non-Nicotine options for smoking cessation



Zyban is the only non-nicotine medication that is also prescribed for the purpose of smoking cessation because of its capacity to reduce nicotine cravings. Smokers should initiate Zyban therapy 1 to 2 weeks before their quit date because it needs time to build up in your body in order to work.

Another medication that is used in smoking cessation is Aventyl. Doctors prescribe Aventyl to help people quit smoking if they have not been able to quit by using first-choice medications (i.e., nicotine replacement therapy and Zyban). Please ask your doctor for more information.

Websites of the Month

If you need more information on Nicotine Replacement Therapies or other smoking cessation medication, check out the following websites:

- www.ykhealthguide.org
- www.capitalhealth.ca/yourhealth/browsebytopic/
- www.tobacco-facts.info

Is it safe to combine treatments?

For some smokers, it is more effective to use a combination of treatments. This can be done safely. But before you combine medications, you must consult your doctor to be sure that it is a safe choice for you. Combining nicotine gum with the patch has been found to be more effective than the gum or patch alone.. The patch provides a steady level of nicotine in the blood, while a few pieces of gum can help calm strong cravings.

Future Smoking Cessation Aides

A nicotine lozenge has been approved for use in the United States. It is not yet available in Canada.

Researchers have also been testing experimental vaccines to help smokers quit. The idea behind the vaccine is to "immunize" smokers against the nicotine rush that fuels their addiction. This research is in its early stages.

Remember: it is unlikely that any of these drugs alone will “cure” smoking.

Coverage of NRTs and Zyban in the Yukon

In the Yukon only Zyban is covered by Insured Health Benefits and then only for seniors through the Pharmacare program.

For status First Nations and Inuit people, the following drugs may be approved through Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB);

- Nicotine Gum
- Nicotine Patch
- Zyban

For more information on NIHB coverage, visit the Health Canada website: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fnih-spni/nihb-ssna/provide-fourmir/pharma-prod/med-list/index_e.html

Individuals on social assistance may apply for coverage of NRTs and Zyban through Client Services. They require a doctor's prescription.