

An overview of tobacco cessation medications

Medications are important and effective tools for increasing cessation success by relieving nicotine craving and withdrawal symptoms. Medical providers should encourage all tobacco users who are planning a quit attempt to use one or a combination of cessation medications, except when medically contraindicated. There are currently seven FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications available that increase long-term tobacco use quit rates. These treatments are listed in the chart below and are available either by prescription or over-the-counter (OTC).¹

Name	Forms	Availability	Duration	Dosage	Cost ^a
Bupropion SR	Generic Zyban® Wellbutrin SR®	Prescription only	Start 1–2 weeks before the quit date. May be used for 2–6 months	150 mg tablet twice daily	1 box of 60 tablets, 150 mg = \$97/mo (generic); \$197–\$210/mo (brand name)
Varenicline	Chantix®	Prescription only	Start 1 week before the quit date; use 3–6 months	1 mg twice daily after patient has stopped smoking	1 mg, box of 56 = \$131 (about 30-day supply)
Nicotine gum	Nicorette Nicorette DS	OTC only	Up to 12 weeks or as needed	One piece every 1–2 hours; not to exceed 24 pieces daily	2 mg, 100–170 pieces = \$48; 4 mg, 100–110 pieces = \$63
Nicotine inhaler	Nicotrol inhaler	Prescription only	Up to 6 months; taper at the end	6–16 cartridges per day, tapering at end of treatment	1 box of 168, 10 mg cartridges = \$196
Nicotine lozenges	Generic Commit	OTC only	3–6 months	At least 9 lozenges per day in first 6 weeks; not to exceed 20 lozenges daily	2 mg, 72 lozenges per box = \$34; 4 mg, 72 lozenges per box = \$39
Nicotine nasal spray	Nicotrol NS	Prescription only	3–6 months; taper at the end	Minimum dose = 8 doses daily; Maximum dose = 40 doses daily	\$49 per bottle, approximately 100 doses
Nicotine patch	Nicoderm CQ Nicotrol	OTC or prescription	8–12 weeks	21 mg daily, first four weeks; 14 mg daily, next two weeks; 7 mg daily, next two weeks	Two-week supply: 7 mg box = \$37 14 mg box = \$47 21 mg box = \$48

^a Cost data excerpted from *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update*. Cost was estimated by averaging the retail price of medications at national chain pharmacies in several U.S. cities and online price listings in January 2008. **For nicotine replacement therapy products, the quantity used will determine how long the supply lasts and will vary by individual.**

Combination Medications

A number of combinations of medications are also effective in improving quitting success, and using two types of tobacco cessation medications simultaneously can improve quit rates when compared with one medication.^{4, 5, 6, 7} Combination therapy or high-dose nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) may be suitable for those who are highly nicotine dependent or have a history of severe withdrawal symptoms.^{1,9} The following combination therapies are effective in increasing quit rates.^{1, 2, 9, 10}

- Long-term nicotine patch + other NRT product (gum or spray)
- Nicotine patch + nicotine inhaler
- Nicotine patch + Bupropion SR

Treatment Options

It is important to provide plan participants with a wide range of treatment options, as success with particular methods varies among individuals. Smokers who are ready to quit should talk with their doctors to learn about possible treatment approaches so they can select the options most appropriate for them. Because the process of quitting usually involves several attempts, smokers may need to try several different types of cessation medications before achieving success. The combination of medications and counseling is more effective than the use of either method alone.¹

References

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