About the Nicotine Patch and Nicotine Gum

The **Nicotine Patch** is a quit medication that you can get from your local drug or grocery store. The patch sticks to your skin like a band-aid that gives you a steady dosage of nicotine through your skin all day long. The patch does not require a doctor’s prescription and has none of the toxins that are in tobacco smoke.

**Nicotine Gum** is a type of sugarless gum that has nicotine in it so your body can take in a steady dose of nicotine, at just the right rate to keep your cravings at bay. Gum allows you to increase or decrease the amount of nicotine you get. It also keeps your mouth busy, which is a great defense against picking up a cigarette. It does not require a doctor’s prescription.

Using the Patch and Gum in Combination

When you use the patch and gum together, you get the long-acting relief from the patch and the option to get additional nicotine from the shorter-acting gum. Used alone, these medications double your chances of quitting. Combining these two has increased quitting success rates from 10 to 13 percent in recent research studies.

Benefits

**Patch**
- Easy to use.
- Reduces symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, including headaches, irritability, and cravings to use tobacco.
- One patch gives you a steady dose of nicotine the whole day.
- Comes in different strengths depending on how much you smoke or chew.

**Gum**
- Reduces symptoms of nicotine withdrawal, including headaches, irritability, and cravings to use tobacco.
- You get to decide how many pieces to chew each day.
- Comes in different strengths depending on how much tobacco you smoke or chew.

How to Use

**Patch**
- Put on the first patch on the morning of your first day without smoking (your Quit Date).
- Place the patch above your waist, but below your neck. Press and hold it firmly in place for 10 to 20 seconds.
- Every morning, take off the patch from the day before and put on a new patch.
- Do not put the patch in the exact same spot for at least 7 days. If you do, the nicotine in the patch can irritate your skin.
- Most people use the patch for about 8 weeks. You can use it longer if you feel a need to.
Gum
- You don’t chew nicotine gum like regular chewing gum. Instead, you “chew and park”: chew each piece 5 to 10 times, and then park it in the corner of your mouth.
- Wait several minutes, and then chew a few more times and park again.
- Repeat every few minutes, but throw away the gum after about 30 minutes.
- Do not drink coffee, tea, juices, or colas with a piece of nicotine gum in your mouth. The acid in these drinks will prevent your mouth from absorbing the nicotine.
- Most people use the nicotine gum for about 8 weeks. You can use it longer if needed.

How Much to Use

Patch
You should use only one nicotine patch per day. They come in 3 strengths:
- 21-mg for those who smoke 11 or more cigarettes per day;
- 14-mg for those who smoke more than 5 but less than 11 cigarettes per day;
- 7-mg for those who smoke less than 5 cigarettes per day.

Gum
You decide how much to use each day. Nicotine Gum comes in 2 different strengths.
- Use 2-mg gum if you wait longer than 30 minutes after waking to smoke.
- Use 4-mg gum if you smoke within 30 minutes of waking.
- Start with 1 piece every 1 to 2 hours, but do not chew more than 24 pieces per day.

Before Combining the Patch and Lozenge, Talk with Your Healthcare Provider if you:
- Have had a heart attack in the last 2 weeks.
- Have had a stroke or TIA in the last 2 weeks.
- Have a severe heart rhythm problem or a very fast heartbeat.
- Have worsening angina or heart/chest pain.
- Are pregnant or are actively trying to get pregnant.
- Are allergic to or have had serious skin irritation from using adhesives (like band-aids) on your skin.
- Have dental problems or jaw pain that make it hard to chew gum.

Cost
Separately, both the patch and lozenge cost less per day than a pack of cigarettes! Together, they may cost more than a pack of cigarettes. However, we hope that you will be using the combination of the two medications for a much shorter period of time than if you did just the patch or lozenge. Remember to check with your employer or health plan to see if they pay for any quit medications.
Common Minor Side Effects — these usually go away after a few days:

Patch
- Patches may make your skin itch or turn red where you put the patch on. If you have this problem, many people report that rubbing in hydrocortisone cream very well and wiping off any excess before applying the patch helps reduce skin irritation. Please talk to your local pharmacist or your healthcare provider to decide if this is right for you.
- Some people have bad dreams or trouble sleeping when they go to bed with the patch on. If you have bad dreams, try taking the patch off one hour before bedtime.
- If you have a minor headache or upset stomach that does not go away after a few days of starting the patch, contact us. We can help you figure out why this is happening.

Gum
- Some people have an upset stomach from using the nicotine gum. This is usually because they are not chewing the gum correctly. If you chew gum like regular chewing gum, you will swallow nicotine and it may upset your stomach.
- If you have a minor headache or upset stomach that does not go away after a few days of starting the gum, contact us. We can help you figure out why this is happening.

Side Effects — contact a pharmacist or your healthcare provider about these:
- Rash that extends beyond where the patch is on your body
- Moderate to severe headache
- Moderate to severe nausea or vomiting
- Irregular heartbeat or palpitations
- Severe dizziness

Serious Side Effects – get medical attention immediately for these:
- Swelling of the throat and difficulty breathing
- Swelling of the mouth and difficulty breathing

Remove the patch and/or stop using the lozenge and seek immediate medical assistance if you experience swelling in your throat or mouth and have difficulty breathing. You may be having a very rare, but very serious allergic reaction.

If you would like more information about the Nicotine Patch or Nicotine Gum, contact a Coach.