

# Nicotine Replacement Therapy Dosing Guide

## Why Use Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)?

- **Proven Effective:** NRT can double quit success rates compared to no medication.
- **Combine with Behavioral Counseling:** Combining NRT with behavioral counseling significantly improves quit rates and long-term success. Counseling provides coping strategies, addresses triggers, and reinforces motivation.
- **Reduces Withdrawal:** Helps individuals feel more comfortable by alleviating withdrawal symptoms without the 4,000+ harmful chemicals found in tobacco products.
- **Low Risk of Dependence:** NRT patches have virtually no abuse potential and very low risk with gum.
- **Comparable Efficacy:** All forms of NRT appear to be similarly effective. Selection should be based on patient preference.

Over the Counter NRT	Dosing	Duration	Instructions for Use	Side Effects/Precautions
<b>Patch</b> (long acting, once/day)	<b>Step 1 (21 mg):</b> >10 cigarettes per day or >1 can smokeless tobacco per day or >1/2 vape pod per day <b>Step 2 (14 mg):</b> ≤ 10 cigarettes per day or ≤ 1 can smokeless tobacco per day or ≤1/2 vape pod per day <b>Step 3 (7 mg):</b> final step or for very light tobacco users  Taper dose approximately every 4 weeks or as withdrawal symptoms, cravings, and patient confidence improve	<b>8-12 weeks minimum, up to 6 months if needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 21 mg/day x 4-6 weeks</li> <li>- 14 mg/day x 2 weeks</li> <li>- 7 mg/day x 2 week</li> </ul>	Apply 1 patch every 24 hours to clean, dry, hairless site on the upper torso or arms  Rotate placement site	Mild to moderate localized skin irritation is common and usually not a reason to discontinue therapy. Rotate application sites daily and consider applying a low-strength hydrocortisone cream if needed  May be removed at bedtime if it disrupts sleep
<b>Gum</b> (short acting, use as needed)	<b>Based on time to first tobacco use of the day:</b> <30 minutes to first use: 4mg >30 minutes to first use: 2 mg	<b>Use one piece every 1-2 hours initially, as needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maximum of 20/day</li> <li>- Taper as withdrawal symptoms, cravings, and patient confidence improve</li> </ul>	Soften and park between cheek and gums for 20-30 minutes  Avoid eating and drinking during use	May interfere with braces, dentures, and bridges  Mouth soreness  If experiencing nausea/indigestion/hiccups, revisit "park" method to ensure appropriate use
<b>Lozenge</b> (short acting, use as needed)	<b>Based on time to first tobacco use of the day:</b> <30 minutes to first use: 4mg >30 minutes to first use: 2 mg	<b>Use one piece every 1-2 hours initially, as needed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maximum of 24/day</li> <li>- Taper as withdrawal symptoms, cravings, and patient confidence improve</li> </ul>	Moisten & park between cheek and gums for 20-30 minutes  Avoid eating and drinking during use	If experiencing nausea/indigestion/hiccups, revisit "park" method to ensure appropriate use
<b>Combination NRT Therapy</b> (FDA-approved; more effective than single-product therapy)	Combine long acting NRT patch with short acting NRT (lozenge or gum)	Use 6-10 pieces of gum or lozenges per day as needed for breakthrough cravings		

## FDA-Approved Prescription Options Include:

NRT Nasal Spray, NRT Inhaler (not currently being produced), Bupropion SR, and Varenicline

## Nicotine Dependence Assessments:

- [Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence](#) (for cigarette use)
- [Penn State Nicotine Dependence Index](#) (versions for cigarette and vape use)
- [Hooked on Nicotine Checklist](#) (for vaping)
- [Severson Smokeless Tobacco Dependence Scale](#) (for smokeless use)

## References

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