

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
Patch (long acting, once/day)	Step 1 (21 mg): >10 cigarettes per day or >1 can smokeless tobacco per day or >1/2 vape pod per day Step 2 (14 mg): ≤ 10 cigarettes per day or ≤ 1 can smokeless tobacco per day or ≤1/2 vape pod per day Step 3 (7 mg): final step or for very light tobacco users Taper dose approximately every 4 weeks or as withdrawal symptoms, cravings, and patient confidence improve	8-12 weeks minimum, up to 6 months if needed - 21 mg/day x 4-6 weeks - 14 mg/day x 2 weeks - 7 mg/day x 2 week	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
Gum (short acting, use as needed)	Based on time to first tobacco use of the day: <30 minutes to first use: 4mg >30 minutes to first use: 2 mg	Use one piece every 1-2 hours initially, as needed - Maximum of 20/day - Taper as withdrawal symptoms, cravings, and patient confidence improve	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
Lozenge (short acting, use as needed)	Based on time to first tobacco use of the day: <30 minutes to first use: 4mg >30 minutes to first use: 2 mg	Use one piece every 1-2 hours initially, as needed - Maximum of 24/day - Taper as withdrawal symptoms, cravings, and patient confidence improve	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
Combination NRT Therapy (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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