



# Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

NRT products have been approved by Health Canada to help people quit tobacco.

## What is NRT:

- Helps prevent or lower cravings when reducing or quitting tobacco.
- Puts fewer chemicals into the body than tobacco.
- Gives enough nicotine to keep patients comfortable while they quit.

## How NRT works:

- Choose NRT dose that matches the patient's current tobacco use.
- Start with higher nicotine dose.
- Gradually reduce the dose until the patient stops using nicotine completely.

## The available NRT products:

### Long Acting

#### PATCH:



- Provides a continuous level of nicotine delivered through the skin over 16 to 24 hours.
- Helps prevent cravings and other withdrawal symptoms.
- Comes in three strengths: 21 mg (step 1), 14 mg (step 2) and 7 mg (step 3).

### Short Acting



#### GUM, LOZENGE, INHALER, and ORAL MIST:

- Provides a single dose of nicotine to be used "as needed" for cravings and withdrawal symptoms.
- Provides a "quick fix" that lasts about 20 minutes.
- Can also be used on a regular schedule.
- The gum and lozenge come in two strengths (typically 2 mg and 4 mg).



#### References

For a list of references, email [tobacco@gov.nu.ca](mailto:tobacco@gov.nu.ca)

Revised November 2025



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# Appropriate NRT Schedule



## Combination Therapy

Combining a long acting patch with an 'as needed' short acting form improves the likelihood of a successful quit attempt over a single product alone. The short acting form helps in the following situations:

- First thing in the morning, especially if the person doesn't wear the patch overnight.
- After stepping down to a lower dose of patch (or off the patch entirely).
- When stressed or getting strong cravings despite wearing a patch.

## NRT in Pregnancy/ Breastfeeding (see [pregnets.org](http://pregnets.org))

Nicotine will cross the placenta and pass into breast milk. NRT is much safer than continued tobacco use.



Pregnant women metabolize nicotine at much higher rates than other adults. Higher doses of NRT are often required.

If she is unable to quit completely, smoking less than five cigarettes a day should be encouraged.

## NRT in Youth (age 12 and older)

Most studies on smoking cessation have been conducted in adults. Studies in adolescence have demonstrated that NRT was well tolerated and associated with no unusual side effects. Significant reductions in smoking, withdrawal and cravings were identified. **Use of NRT in youth is preferred over continued tobacco use.**

Despite this evidence, current product labelling for NRT lists the age of less than 18 as a contraindication for use. The Department of Health recommends that health care providers in Nunavut consider the "off-label" practice of using NRT in those age 12 years and older who are regular tobacco users, in combination with counselling supports.

## Reduce to Quit

People can use any form of NRT to prepare to quit or to reduce the amount of tobacco used (if they are not ready to quit completely). This means using tobacco and NRT together. Although not recommended on product labeling, this is considered safe (FDA, 2015).

### The following starting regimens

are a guideline only; the dose may need adjustment depending on the person's response to therapy. Start with 2 to 4 weeks of treatment and reassess.

#### Less than 10 cigarettes daily (1 cigar/day)

- Short acting form alone OR
- 14 mg patch +/- short acting form as needed

#### 10-25 cigarettes daily (2-4 cigars/day OR 1 tin chew/week)

- 21 mg patch AND short acting form as needed

#### More than 25 cigarettes daily (5+ cigars/day OR 2+ tins chew/week)

- 21 mg + 7 mg (28 mg) patch AND short acting form as needed



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# What is stocked at the health centre?



Patches (all strengths)



Gum 2 mg



Inhaler

## What is covered by the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program?



Nicotine Patches

252

patches per year  
of any brand



about a  
5 to 6 month  
supply



Nicotine Gum



Nicotine Lozenges



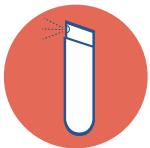
Nicotine Inhalers

945

945 pieces/  
cartridges  
per year



about 6 pieces/  
cartridges a day  
for 5 months



Nicotine Oral Mist

23

containers  
per year



about 20 sprays  
per day for  
6 months



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# Using Nicotine Replacement Therapies



## Nicotine Patch (21 mg, 14 mg, 7 mg)

Apply to clean, hairless skin on the torso. Apply new patch daily, rotating sites. May remove at bedtime if sleep disrupted. Redness or mild tingling is normal. Rash may be allergy to adhesive – can try different brand. Lotions applied prior to patch may prevent sticking.



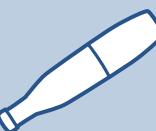
## Nicotine Gum (2 mg, 4 mg)

Chew slowly until peppery taste, then park in the side of the mouth. Chew again when taste starts to fade. Move around the mouth to prevent irritation. DO NOT SWALLOW. Should not be used by people with poor teeth, dentures or jaw problems. People who smoke within 30 min of awakening may prefer the 4 mg strength.



## Nicotine Lozenge (1 mg, 2 mg, 4 mg)

Suck until peppery taste, then park in the side of the mouth. Suck again when taste starts to fade. Move around the mouth to prevent irritation. DO NOT SWALLOW or CHEW. People who smoke within 30 min of awakening may prefer the 4 mg strength.



## Nicotine Inhaler (10 mg Cartridge – releases 4 mg of nicotine)

Lightly puff on mouthpiece (nicotine is absorbed through the lining of the mouth). DO NOT INHALE DEEPLY INTO LUNGS. One cartridge will last for about 20 min of continuous puffing. Cold temperatures can reduce the amount of nicotine released from the product.



## Nicotine Oral Mist (1 mg per spray; 150 sprays per canister)

Prime before using. Release one spray into the mouth – avoid lips. DO NOT SPRAY INTO THROAT. Try not to swallow until a few seconds after administration. May repeat dose if craving not relieved within a few minutes.

## Caution:

- Drinking anything acidic like coffee, juice or pop should be avoided while using a short acting NRT product as they may reduce the absorption of nicotine.
- Side effects from short acting forms include hiccups (lozenge & gum), heartburn/nausea (lozenge & gum), cough (inhaler), throat irritation (inhaler, oral mist) and tingling lips (oral mist). This is often caused by incorrect use of product.



### Contact the QuitLine

Toll free: 1-866-368-7848  
Email: [tobacco@gov.nu.ca](mailto:tobacco@gov.nu.ca)



See **NuQuits** on Facebook.



Go to: [nuquits.ca](http://nuquits.ca)



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