



# Prescription Medications to Help You Stop Using Tobacco

Congratulations! Making the decision to stop smoking is the most important thing you can do to improve and protect your health, as well as the health of those around you. Trying to quit on your own, sometimes called “cold turkey”, may be difficult and uncomfortable. Tobacco users are sometimes more successful in quitting if they use medications and attend a quit smoking program. Using FDA approved medications can help make your quit attempt more comfortable and more successful.

## **Are there medications to help me stop smoking/using tobacco?**

There are several different medications to help you stop tobacco use. Four of these medications are available only with a prescription. Two of these medications are pills (bupropion and varenicline) and two are nicotine replacement products (inhalers and nasal spray). Each of these medications are only approved for those 18 years of age and older. Below is information about these four medications, how they are taken and some of the possible side effects.

### **What is bupropion (Zyban®)?**

Bupropion is a pill that you take once or twice a day. It is the same drug as the antidepressant *Wellbutrin*. Bupropion works by making smoking less desirable to you. Start taking this medication about 7-10 days *before* your quit date. Most people take bupropion for a total of 8-12 weeks.

Although many people have quit successfully with this medication, some have experienced side effects such as: an increase in blood pressure or allergic reactions. You should not take bupropion if you have a history of seizures or have an eating disorder (anorexia, bulimia etc.). While most people tolerate this medication well, some have experienced depression, agitation, suicidal thoughts and suicidal actions. People taking bupropion should use caution when driving or operating heavy machinery until they know how this drug will affect them

You can take other nicotine replacement products (e.g. nicotine gum, nasal spray, etc.) along with bupropion. Consult your health care pro-

vider if you would like to take the bupropion in combination with nicotine replacement products.

### **What is varenicline (Chantix®)?**

Varenicline is a pill you take once a day. Varenicline works by blocking the areas of the brain that are affected by nicotine. Start taking varenicline about 7-10 days *before* your quit date. Usually, you will be asked to take a smaller dose for a few days then increase to a higher dose. Varenicline is taken for 12 weeks. If you have successfully quit at 12 weeks, you can continue taking it for an additional 12 weeks.

Although many people have quit successfully with varenicline, some have experienced side effects with this medication such as: nausea, vomiting and unusual, vivid or upsetting dreams. If you have kidney problems, talk to your doctor before using varenicline. People taking varenicline should be aware that it may cause depression, agitation, suicidal thoughts and suicidal actions. People taking varenicline should use caution when driving or operating heavy machinery until they know how this drug will affect them.

### **What are nicotine inhalers?**

Nicotine inhalers are plastic mouthpieces with replaceable nicotine cartridges. Nicotine replacement products such as this contain the nicotine you would normally get with a tobacco product. For best results, puff on the mouthpiece, and do not take large inhalations. Large inhalations can cause coughing and throat irritation. You can use up to 16 cartridges per day when you first quit smoking. Do not start using this product until you

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have quit smoking (or quit using other tobacco products). If you smoke and also use nicotine replacement products, you may develop serious side effects from an overdose of nicotine (see below). Talk to your health care provider before using the nicotine inhaler in combination with other nicotine replacement products.

**What is nicotine nasal spray?**

Nicotine nasal spray is a liquid you spray in your nose. To avoid nasal irritation, do not inhale the spray deeply into your nose. In order to avoid the side effects of an overdose of nicotine, do not smoke and also use nicotine replacement products. Talk to your health care provider before using the nasal spray in combination with other nicotine replacement products.

**Which tobacco cessation medications are the right ones for you?**

Sometimes combining the nicotine replacement products (such as using the patch/gum/lozenge or nasal spray at the same time) or using them together with bupropion can make you more comfortable and more successful in quitting. Talk to your health care provider who can help you decide which products are best for you.

**What are the side effects of too much nicotine?**

You can get too much nicotine by taking nicotine replacement products and continuing your tobacco use. You should seek medical help if any of the following develop as they may be a sign of an overdose of nicotine: nausea, vomiting, agitation, rapid breathing, fast or irregular heartbeat, or an increase in your blood pressure.

**ACTION STEPS:**

- If you are having trouble quitting tobacco products “cold turkey”, speak with your health care provider about other ways to help you become successful.
- Prescription medications may help you quit smoking

- Any quit attempt will be improved by the support of a smoking cessation program
- Seek medical help immediately if you experience an allergic reaction or have signs of toxic nicotine levels
- Don't get discouraged with any setbacks in your attempts to quit. Your goal of quitting is important.

**Authors:** Tobacco Control Committee of the American Thoracic Society, Patricia Folan RN, MS, Diane Massucci RN, DNP

**Reviewer:** Suzanne C Lareau RN, MS

**Resources:**

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