

Kick The Habit!

# MEDICATIONS TO HELP YOU QUIT

Margarita  
Camche  
Smoking  
Cessation  
Program



**Mount  
Sinai**

# When it comes to medications, you have choices.

There are a wide variety of medications that can help you stop smoking. In this piece, you will find out about the different choices you have. We'll help you understand when and how they are used. So when you meet with your doctor, you'll have the knowledge you need to discuss them and make the right decision for you

Your doctor may prescribe one or more of these:

- **Varenicline (Chantix)**
- **Bupropion (Wellbutrin)**
- **Nicotine patch**
- **Nicotine gum or lozenge**
- **Nicotine Inhaler**

## Varenicline (Chantix)

Varenicline (Chantix) is the most effective medicine for quitting smoking. Many national organizations that focus on helping smokers quit recommend Chantix. It does not contain nicotine. This cannot be used if you are pregnant.

Chantix is a pill that you take with a large glass of water. Your doctor will tell you how often and what dose to take. It takes at least one week to work, and for some people even longer. Once it starts working you will think less frequently about cigarettes. If you do smoke, the smoking will not give you any pleasure.

You stay on the treatment for at least 3 months. During this time, it's helpful to develop new habits to replace smoking.

You may have seen warnings in the past on TV about a possible suicide risk with Chantix. This has been studied carefully in over 8,000 smokers, including many people with mental illness. These studies found that Chantix does not increase the chance of mood swings, compared to other types of medications used to help people stop smoking. Stopping smoking itself can make you feel sad, especially if you were using cigarettes to help with depression. Speak with your doctor or nurse practitioner if this is the case, and they can give you other treatments for depression. Studies vary regarding any small cardiac risk.

Some people feel a bit nauseous when they first begin to take Chantix. This usually goes away in a week or so. Some people have nightmares with Chantix. If nausea or dreams are a problem, your health care provider can cut the dose in half or stop it altogether. Chantix is covered by most insurance providers. Some may require a prior authorization. If you have kidney disease, the dosage may need to be adjusted. If you have a seizure disorder, Chantix is not recommended.

## Bupropion (Wellbutrin)

Bupropion (Wellbutrin) is a pill that takes 14 days before it starts to work. You continue to smoke while waiting for it to start working. It does not contain nicotine, but it is as effective as nicotine replacement in helping you to quit. This cannot be used if you are pregnant.

*Smoking is a tough addiction.*

*Don't feel that you have to quit cold turkey and do it by yourself. The goal is to succeed. And medicines can help—and they really work!*

Wellbutrin is also an antidepressant. So if you use cigarettes to help with depression, it can be very beneficial. You should not take it if you have a seizure disorder, alcoholism, anorexia nervosa, or bipolar disorder. It can cause headache, insomnia, dry mouth, and hypertension.

### **Nicotine Replacement**

Nicotine is the chemical in cigarettes that causes addiction. Nicotine is what you crave when you are trying to quit. Nicotine does not cause cancer. It is all the other chemicals in cigarettes that cause cancer, lung disease, and heart disease. Nicotine replacement should not be taken if you have unstable cardiac disease, are pregnant or breast-feeding, or are under 18 years old.

### **If I'm addicted to nicotine, why should I take more?**

These medications provide just enough nicotine to block the bad feelings or the withdrawal that happens when you are

trying to quit. Withdrawal can make it hard to think and make you moody. Nicotine makes that feeling go away, whether you are getting it from the patch or the cigarette. But the nicotine in these medicines does not give you the same pleasurable feeling that cigarettes do. These medications help to take away the reason to smoke, while at the same time blocking the bad feelings of withdrawal. That is how it breaks the addiction. It doesn't give you the same "kick," but it allows you to get through your day without feeling angry and cranky.

### **Different forms and different speeds**

#### **Slow-acting nicotine replacement:**

The nicotine patch gives a slow, low level of nicotine to prevent cravings. It takes an hour to start working. Put the patch on first thing in the morning. Take it off before bedtime, because it can cause nightmares.

### **What dose is right for me?**

Your provider will choose the dose that is correct for you based on the number of cigarettes you are smoking on your most stressful day.

### **How do I know if the dose is right?**

You will have fewer cravings.

### **How do I know if the dose is too high?**

You would get nausea, dizziness and headaches, just like you felt when you had your first cigarette. If that happens, let your provider know and they will decrease the dose.

### **How long should I stay on the patch?**

As it becomes easier to stay smoke-free, the dose will be gradually decreased and eventually stopped.

### **Fast-acting nicotine replacement:**

Nicotine gum, lozenges or the inhaler give a quick burst of medication and starts working in minutes to help you when the day is starting or when you need quick relief for a craving.

Nicotine gum has a misleading name because people often chew it. Do not chew the gum! Bite it once or twice and pack the gum in your cheek. The nicotine will slowly be absorbed through your cheek lining. You will taste it and it tingles. If you chew it, too much nicotine comes out all at once and you will get nausea or hiccups. Go slowly and you will be able to control the speed of the nicotine release. People with dentures shouldn't use the gum because it is sticky.

The nicotine lozenge is also a quick relief form of nicotine. Place it on your tongue and let it slowly dissolve. Just like the gum, you can use it to help start the day or for relief from cravings. It does not stick to dentures.

The nicotine inhaler is not an e-cigarette. It is FDA-approved and does not produce any heat. It is a plastic tube shaped like a pipe. You unscrew the front from the back and pull it apart. In the box you will find small cartridges that contain nicotine. Pop the cartridge into the pipe and screw it back together. You puff on the inhaler, pulling the nicotine into your mouth. Don't inhale it deeply; this may take a little practice. The nicotine gets into your blood through your cheeks instead of your lungs. It may irritate your throat if you inhale it. Practice with your pharmacist and bring it to your next office visit so you can practice with your provider. Like the gum and the lozenge, you use the inhaler to start your day and for cravings.



# You don't need to do it alone. Medications can make it easier.

You don't need to “tough it out” if you want to stop smoking. The good news is that there are plenty of medications that can help you kick the habit for good. They can reduce cravings, ease you off nicotine, and increase your odds of success.



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# Tips for using nicotine replacement:

- Yes, the patch and gum or lozenge or inhaler can be used together! Each has its uses. The patch is slow-acting and takes up to an hour before it starts to work. It also doesn't give you the same "kick" that cigarettes do. That's why many people use one of the faster-acting options first thing in the morning. This can be one of the hardest times of the day. So, when you wake up, put the patch on and also use one of the faster-acting options like the gum, lozenge, or inhaler. You can also use them again later in the day if you get a craving.
- Smoking with the patch on is not more dangerous than smoking without it. If you smoke with the patch on, you may get nauseous and want to put the cigarette out. Some people are afraid to start the patch because they think they might have a heart attack if they smoke with it on. This is not true. The risk is from smoking. Nicotine replacement is even recommended for smokers just wanting to cut down.
- The patch is not covered by Medicare since it is over the counter, but it is covered by Medicaid. If you call the New York State Smokers Quitline at 1-866-697-8487, they will send you a 2-week supply. Don't worry if you can't get the patch. There are other choices. Medicare covers Chantix and Wellbutrin and the nicotine inhaler with a prescription.

**To learn more about the services  
available at Mount Sinai, please call:**

**212-523-3606**