Managing Nicotine Withdrawal Symptoms with NRT

What is NRT?
- “NRT” is Nicotine Replacement Therapy and can help increase your chances of quitting for good.
- NRT is better known as nicotine patches, gum or lozenges, and can be purchased at any pharmacy, over the counter (OTC).
- NRT also has two prescription medications – the inhaler and the nasal spray – which can be purchased with a doctor’s prescription.

How can NRT help me stop using tobacco?
- NRT is made to ease your nicotine cravings, known as withdrawal symptoms, which are common when quitting tobacco.
- Symptoms helped by NRT use include: irritability, frustration, anger, craving, hunger, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, restlessness and insomnia.
- NRT replaces the amount of nicotine your body is used to consuming, while avoiding the 4,000 chemicals found in tobacco smoke, allowing you safely decrease your nicotine use at a rate that helps you successfully quit.

Is NRT safe?
- NRT is a safe alternative to tobacco use.
- NRT is less addictive than tobacco, so you won’t be trading one addiction for another.
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, talk to your provider about what options are best for you.

What are my options and how do I use them?
- There are 5 FDA approved NRT medications and 2 non-nicotine based medications.
  - **Consider this:** a pack of cigarettes is about 20 mg of nicotine. The amount of nicotine in the medication you begin to use to successfully quit smoking should not be less than what your body is currently used to.
    - A 21 mg patch is used for 20 cigarettes (1 pack)
    - Most people step down too quickly, before they are ready to fully handle their cravings.
- **Nicotine Transdermal Patch (OTC):**
  - Patches vary in strength and provide a low steady dose of nicotine throughout the day.
  - Patches may be placed anywhere on the upper body, including the arms or back.
  - Rotate where patch is placed to avoid skin irritation.
  - Patch may be removed at bedtime if sleep disturbances occur.
  - Do not cut in half.
- **Nicotine Lozenges (OTC):**
  - The lozenge is quicker acting and can be used for situational cravings.
  - Place the lozenge between your cheek and your gum.
  - Do not drink anything for at least 15 minutes prior to use so that nicotine is better absorbed.
  - Do not bite, chew or swallow the lozenge.
  - Try not to swallow too much saliva while using the lozenge, which can cause nausea.
  - Occasionally move the lozenge from cheek to cheek.
Nicotine Gum (OTC):
- The gum is quicker acting and can be used for situational cravings.
- Chew the gum briefly, until you begin to feel a tingling feeling, and then place between your cheek and gums. Resume chewing when tingle fades.
- Chew the gum slowly to allow the nicotine to be absorbed by the lining of the mouth and to prevent nausea.
- The nicotine usually lasts about 30 minutes.

Nicotine Inhaler (Prescription only):
- The inhaler is a cartridge attached to a mouth piece.
- Puff on the dispenser several times per minute to control cravings.
- Nicotine cartridge is depleted after 20 minutes of active puffing.
- Do not inhale into the lungs (like a cigarette) but “puff” in short breaths.
- Open cartridge retains its potency for 24 hours.

Nicotine Nasal Spray (Prescription only):
- Place one spray in each nostril 1-2 times an hour, or up to 5/hour or 40 doses/day.

Bupropion/Wellbutrin/Zyban (Prescription only):
- Begin 1-2 weeks prior to quit date.
- Can be used safely with NRT.

Varenicline/ Chantix (Prescription only):
- Begin use 1 week prior to quit date.

How long should I use NRT?
- Most product labels say that the product should be used for 8-12 weeks

Can I use more than one NRT?
- If the current amount of NRT you are using is not fully managing your withdrawal, you can consider increasing your nicotine amount or combining options.
  - Combine the patch with the 2 mg gum or lozenge (for situational cravings).
  - Use more than one patch at a time for increased nicotine.
  - Talk to your health care provider about what will work best for you.

What are the costs for using NRT?
- The cost for NRT is much less than cigarettes. NRT is typically used for a limited amount of time, whereas tobacco is consumed for many years.
- The daily cost of most NRT is less than $2.00.