

Key Points to Help Dispel the Myths about Nicotine and NRT

For Consumers, Patients, Quitline Operators, and Health Care Providers

Many smokers have misperceptions about nicotine, which often leads them to not use evidence-based treatments when quitting. Misperceptions about nicotine are often derived from how the harmful effects of tobacco are presented in cessation materials. Please use this factsheet to review your cessation materials and ensure that they contain accurate information on nicotine and its role in quitting.

1. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) can double a smoker's chances of quitting smoking. ^{1, 2, 17}
2. NRT reduces the intensity of withdrawal symptoms associated with cigarette smoking, such as irritability, frustration, anger, craving, hunger and weight gain, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, and insomnia. ¹⁷
3. The likelihood of long-term cessation (>6 months) is increased when a smoker uses NRT in adequate amounts and for a sufficient period of time. ^{17, 26}
4. Nicotine and NRT do not cause cancer. ²
5. Using NRT is not trading one nicotine addiction for another because the likelihood of long-term dependence to NRT is very low ^{1, 2} and NRT products are much safer than cigarettes. ^{2, 3}
6. The amount of nicotine delivered in NRT is less than in cigarettes and is controlled and delivered more slowly. ⁴⁻⁶
7. NRT products can be used alone or in combination. ^{1, 17, 26}
8. The cost of NRT will vary by frequency and duration of product use. In 2005, the average daily cost of various pharmacotherapies were estimated at \$6.07 for the nicotine inhaler, \$5.81 for nicotine gum, \$4.98 for nicotine lozenges, \$3.91 for nicotine patches, \$3.40 for nicotine nasal spray, and \$4.30 for sustained-release bupropion. ¹⁷ In comparison, as of November 2005 the average retail price of a package of 20 cigarettes (full-priced brands) ranged from a low of \$3.51 in South Carolina to a high of \$5.96 in Alaska. ²⁵
9. NRT is customarily used only for a limited time, whereas cigarettes are consumed for as long as the smoker continues to smoke—typically many years. ³
10. Nicotine does not cause tobacco-related diseases; rather it is the toxins found in cigarettes, and not the nicotine, that causes the negative health effects. ^{2, 14-15}
11. Nicotine does not cause the yellowing of teeth, fingernails, and skin; rather it is the tar found in cigarettes that does. ¹⁶
12. NRT can be safely used by people with diabetes or high blood pressure and does not increase the risk of heart attacks (note: the effects of NRT on those with acute cardiovascular disease has not been studied sufficiently). ^{3, 7-13, 18-24}
13. NRT does not cause weight gain, nicotine may actually help control weight. ³



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