

**Boston Medical Center  
Tobacco Treatment Team  
Tips to Get the Most Benefit From Your  
Nicotine Replacement Therapy**

Using medications to help you quit smoking can double your chances of quitting. To gain the most benefit, nicotine patches are often used in combination with nicotine gum or lozenges. Continue to use the patch and gum/lozenge for at least 6 weeks or as prescribed. You may keep a few pieces of gum or lozenge to use in order to prevent a relapse after the six weeks. If you have any questions concerning your nicotine replacement medications, contact your health care provider, pharmacist or call the Tobacco Treatment line at 617 638 7665.

## **NICOTINE PATCHES**

### **How to use**

- Every morning, place a fresh patch on a hairless area of skin between your neck and waist
- Keep the patch on for a full 24 hours before removing.
- When you remove the old patch, place a new patch on a different area of skin.
  - Using the same area of skin can cause skin irritation or rash, so it is best to rotate sites.
- The patch sticks best when skin is clean and dry.
  - Avoid lotion/oils on skin where you will place patch, as this may prevent the patch from sticking.
  - Do not use on skin that has a rash or cut.

### **Helpful hints**

- Some people notice trouble sleeping or nightmares after starting the patch.
  - If you have these, try taking the patch off each night at bedtime.
  - Place a new patch in the morning.
- It is best to avoid smoking while using the patch.
  - Smoking while using the patch can cause side effects, such as dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, headache, or fast heartbeat

## **NICOTINE GUM AND LOZENGES**

### **How to use Nicotine Gum**

- Do not chew nicotine gum the way you would chew regular gum!
  - Chew the gum until you taste the flavor or feel a tingling in your mouth (this activates the nicotine).
  - Then stop chewing the gum and place the gum between your cheek and gum (this is when the nicotine gets absorbed by your body).
  - Wait until the taste or tingling is almost gone, then start chewing again.
  - Keep repeating this cycle until there is no flavor left in the gum.
- You can chew one piece of gum or lozenge every 1-2 hours as needed for cravings
- Stomach pain, nausea, hiccups, heartburn, or headache may be a sign that you are chewing the gum too fast.

### **How to use Nicotine Lozenges**

- Do not suck on or chew the lozenge!
  - Park the lozenge between your gum and cheek. As the lozenge dissolves, nicotine will be absorbed.
- You can use one lozenge every 1-2 hours.
- Do not swallow the lozenge, because your body can't use nicotine once you swallow it.
  - Swallowing the lozenge may also cause stomach upset, pain, or nausea.

### **Helpful hints for using Nicotine Gum and Lozenges**

- Nicotine gum or lozenge takes 20 minutes to start working (by comparison, a cigarette takes 10 seconds).
  - Try distracting yourself or using a delaying technique while waiting for the nicotine to start working.
  - Use the gum/lozenge 20 minutes before an expected trigger so it starts working when you need it.
- Avoid acidic beverages such as coffee or soda before and during use of the nicotine gum or lozenges.
  - Acidic drinks prevents the body from absorbing the nicotine, so it may not help with your craving.
  - If you need a piece of gum or lozenge in the morning, take it before you drink your morning coffee.

Note: This information is not comprehensive. Read the package insert or talk to your doctor about side effects, medication interactions, or for questions about the benefits and use of nicotine replacement therapy