

Background Information

Methods for Quitting a Tobacco Addiction

**Tobacco dependence is an addiction.
Addictions are not lifestyle choices or habits!**

There are various methods of quitting tobacco use. Some of the methods include:

1. The 'Cold Turkey' Method
2. Nicotine Replacement Therapies
 - Nicotine Gum
 - Nicotine Lozenge
 - Nicotine Patch
 - Nicotine Inhaler
3. Prescription Drugs
 - Champix® (Varenicline)
 - Zyban® (Bupropion)

1. The 'Cold Turkey' Method

Quitting 'cold turkey' means that the person who smokes has stopped immediately, without the use of any medications. In the past, the majority of people have quit their tobacco addiction using this method. Quitting 'cold turkey' is free and does not require a prescription. The body begins to heal itself almost immediately.

However, when an individual quits suddenly, the amount of nicotine they have in their blood stream declines quickly. As a result, the body may experience some symptoms of withdrawal. How strong these symptoms are and how long they last can vary, but for most people they generally subside in a week or two.

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Some people may find it helpful to use medications to stop using tobacco. Anyone wanting to quit should discuss their options with a health care provider.

2. Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs)

NRTs available in Canada include the nicotine gum, patch, lozenge and inhaler. All forms can be purchased without a prescription at a pharmacy. They act to replace the nicotine that would be obtained from using tobacco products.

Nicotine is the addictive component in tobacco. Nicotine from NRTs will enter the blood stream after being absorbed through the layers of the mouth or skin. This differs from smoking where nicotine enters the body through the lungs. In order to minimize or avoid withdrawal symptoms, NRTs allow the body to continue to receive nicotine, but without all the harmful substances that come with tobacco use.

Studies indicate a better success rate of quitting by people using NRTs. The amount of nicotine in an NRT may be less than the amount normally derived from smoking. Recommended dosages can be adjusted and NRTs can be used in combination with each other to best fit the individual's needs. This may be important for those with greater nicotine dependence or for people who have experienced withdrawal symptoms during a previous quit attempt. A health care provider can assist and help individualize a treatment plan.

**To make an educated choice on how to lead a tobacco-free life,
see the following link:**

<http://www.sk.lung.ca/index.php/services-mainmenu/resources/printed-materials#tobacco>

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3. Prescription Drugs

Zyban® and Champix® are both taken in pill form but act very differently in the body. These medications are prescribed, so a consultation with a health-care provider is needed. Champix® (Varenicline) and Zyban® (Bupropion) are some of the prescription drugs recommended for quitting smoking. These medications are listed on the provincial formulary which means that some of the costs may be covered.

For more information about these prescription drugs and drug plan benefits, see the following link:

<http://www.health.gov.sk.ca/drug-plan-benefits>

Champix® (Varenicline)

Champix® works by stimulating dopamine, in a similar fashion to nicotine. Dopamine is an important messenger in the brain. This results in reduced cravings and withdrawal symptoms. This drug also prevents the dopamine release that occurs with nicotine consumption. This means that the pleasure received from smoking is decreased. Champix® is not recommended for use in combination with nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) or smoking because it competes with the nicotine for receptor sites in the brain, and may cause side effects.

Zyban® (Bupropion)

Zyban® is an anti-depressant that helps decrease nicotine withdrawal. Treatment should begin before the target quit date, since approximately one week of treatment is required to achieve a steady-state blood level of Zyban®. Individuals should set a target quit date and quit smoking sometime during the second week of treatment. Zyban® may be used in combination with NRTs.