

I want to stop using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)

The manufacturers recommend using NRT products for 12 weeks. However, whether it be mouth spray, inhalator, lozenges or gum, some people find that they are still using an NRT product or products many months or even years after they quit smoking and they want to stop.

The first thing to bear in mind is that compared to smoking, there are much less health risks associated with nicotine.

However, if you remain nicotine-dependent, you are at increased risk of starting smoking again. Furthermore, as with any habit-forming drug, your tolerance for nicotine will increase over time and you will find you need to use more NRT to get the same effect.

Here's some guidance to help you quit NRT

Stopping suddenly is likely to result in withdrawal symptoms such as tobacco cravings, nervousness, irritability, difficulty concentrating and headaches.

Withdrawal symptoms could be more severe if you have used NRT for a long time or you are using a lot of it. We recommend cutting down gradually.

Do some preparation

1. Write down the reason why you want to quit. Is it for your health? Are you pregnant and worried about the NRT affecting the developing foetus? Is it costing you too much money? Write down your goal and what you want to achieve by quitting.

2. Work out how much NRT you are using each day i.e. how many lozenges, how many pieces of gum, how many inhalator cartridges you use or how many sprays of the mouth spray. Note down the times of the day when you use your NRT and how much eg two lozenges first thing in the morning, a gum after meals, etc. Now think about the different times of the day when you use NRT and rank them in terms of how difficult it will be to stop using NRT at that time.
3. Stop or reduce the NRT you are using at the easiest time of the day. If you are trying to quit using NRT lozenges or gum, try substituting the NRT product for a piece of sugar-free gum or a sugar-free sweet to give yourself the feeling of having the gum/lozenge in your mouth.
4. Once you are comfortable with this small reduction, choose another time of the day and reduce/stop your NRT use at that time. Repeat these steps until you are no longer using NRT. It doesn't matter how much time (within reason) that you take between each step. Step down when you feel comfortable, always keeping your goal in mind.

It might be helpful to use the same techniques you learned to help you quit smoking. For example, have your preferred methods of distraction ready to tide you over a craving e.g. text a friend, play a game on your phone, take a walk. Remember each craving might feel like it lasts a long time but generally they pass in less than 5 minutes, so you need a distraction to see you through the 5 minutes.

IMPORTANT If at any point you think you are at risk of returning to smoking, please resume your normal NRT use. You might like to keep an 'emergency' pack of NRT available for those situations when a sudden trigger causes an urge to smoke.