

Nicotine Replacement Therapy

Quitting smoking is one of the most common adult resolutions for the New Year. The one fact that all the statistics have in common is this: most people only make it to February before relapsing into their bad habit. This doesn't have to be the case!

What makes it so difficult to quit in the first place? The nicotine in cigarettes causes a short surge in the neurotransmitter dopamine. This surge causes a short feeling of euphoria, a mini "high". Nicotine increases levels of dopamine in the reward

centre of the brain, which reinforces the need to smoke. Repeated exposure to nicotine causes changes in areas of the brain involved in learning, stress, and self-control. This ultimately leads to addiction and the difficulties in quitting.

Female pharmacy customer: I am determined this year to give up smoking! What can you recommend? I checked the internet and there is so much information!

PTA: Yes, the range of products for nicotine replacement therapy is really big! It's not easy with so many different patches, sprays and chewing gum. First, you have to consider what kind of smoker you are. Why is that?

You see, patches tend to work effectively for people who are not really heavy smokers, and such smokers generally don't have too many problems with withdrawal symptoms.

Oh, I see.

Would you like a spray, or would you prefer chewing gum?

The chewing gum please.

Do you mind telling me how many cigarettes you smoke per day?

About fifteen or so, a few more if I'm in company of other smokers. Why?

I can give you the pack with 2mg chewing gum. If you smoked 20 cigarettes or more I would recommend the 4mg gum.

Okay! I'll start with the chewing gum. Do you have different flavours?

Yes, we do. The three flavours are: white mint, fresh mint, and fresh fruit.

I'll try the fresh mint.

Would you like a pack of 30 or of 105?

I'll start with the 30 please, just to see how I get on.

It is best to take it step-by-step. It works like this: by slowly chewing the gum you reduce the urge to smoke. It's not easy, but following the plan will make it much more effective, by slowly weaning yourself off the cigarettes.

How long should it take?

For 12 weeks. Slowly chew the gum for 1 minute, after that put it between your teeth and your cheek until the taste lessens. Repeat these two steps for 30 minutes, and please remember not to chew too hard. Then there's a break of 30 minutes before using the next gum. According to the information, the optimal dosage is 8-12 gums in the first six weeks, with a maximum of 16 per day.

And then?

Then slowly reduce the daily number of gums to zero over the following six weeks.

Sounds good! I'll try my best. ■

Catherine Croghan,
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VOCABULARY

Replacement	Ersatz
Quitting smoking	Rauchen aufgeben
most common	häufigste
resolution	Vorsätze
relapsing	zurückfallen
bad habit	schlechte Gewohnheit
surge	Anstieg
reward centre	Belohnungszentrum
reinforces	verstärkt
repeated exposure	wiederholte Einwirkung, wiederholtes Ausgesetztsein
ultimately	letztendlich
addiction	Sucht, Abhängigkeit
determined	entschlossen
patches	Pflaster
consider	überlegen
withdrawal symptoms	Entzugserscheinung
in company	in Gesellschaft
flavours	Geschmacksrichtungen
weaning	abgewöhnen
lessens	nachlassen