

Nicotine Patch

Information for Quitting Tobacco

About the nicotine patch:

The nicotine patch replaces the nicotine that you have been getting from tobacco. The nicotine from the nicotine patch goes through your skin and into your bloodstream. This helps to reduce cravings to use tobacco and other withdrawal symptoms.

How to use it:

The nicotine patch comes in three different doses. Your starting dose is determined by how much tobacco you use.

Start wearing the first nicotine patch when you wake up. For most people this is first thing in the morning. Continue to apply a fresh nicotine patch each day at about this same time. Throw away the used patch.

On the first day of your quit, it may take a few hours for the nicotine from the nicotine patch to get into your bloodstream. Make a plan for how you will avoid using tobacco if you are getting a craving to use. Some people use a piece of nicotine gum or a nicotine lozenge while they are waiting for the nicotine patch to kick in.

Peel off the protective cover from the patch before putting it on your skin. Apply the sticky part of the nicotine patch to a non-hairy, clean, and dry area of your upper back, shoulder, or upper arm.

Put the nicotine patch on a new area of skin each day. Putting the patch in a different place each day will help prevent skin irritation.

Press and hold the nicotine patch firmly with the palm of your hand against your skin for about 10 seconds.

If the patch causes mild redness or itchiness you can apply over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream to help. Do not use products with diphenhydramine or antibiotics. Contact your health care provider if the rash spreads, blisters, causes hives, or concerns you in any way.

Do not put the patch on irritated or broken skin.

Do not cut the nicotine patch. The nicotine from a cut patch doesn't get into your system reliably.

Wash your hands after applying the nicotine patch to rinse off any nicotine.

Nicotine patches are usually worn for 24 hours. If you have trouble sleeping with the patch on, you can take it off before you go to bed or at bedtime and put a new one on the next morning.

Plan to use the nicotine patch for 6-12 weeks. Use smaller dose patches when you feel more comfortable with your quit. Talk with your health care provider if you feel you need to use the nicotine patch for longer than the time it says on the label.

Side effects and cautions:

Common side effects from the nicotine patch can include:

Mild skin irritation in the place where the patch is placed, indigestion, vivid dreams, and sleep disturbance.

Rare reactions to the nicotine patch could include but are not limited to:

Blisters or sores on the skin, rash on the body, severe heartburn or nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness, fast heart rate, and chest pain.

If any serious reactions happen to you, take the patch off and call your health care provider or seek emergency care.

Please discuss use of the nicotine patch with your health care provider if you have any of the conditions listed below. Use of nicotine might be a health risk for some people with these conditions.

- Active heart disease
- A recent stroke
- An irregular or abnormal heartbeat
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes

Do not use the patch if you are allergic to adhesive or have skin problems, like psoriasis.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, do not use the nicotine patch unless advised by your health care provider. The safety to your baby is not entirely known.

Some people ask if it is safe to use the patch if you slip and use tobacco. It is safe for most people to use the patch even if you slip up or haven't completely stopped using tobacco on your quit day. Keep trying to quit.

PLEASE KEEP THE NICOTINE PATCHES OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN AND PETS.

The information on this handout can change. Please refer to package inserts, and talk to your health care provider if you have any questions or concerns.

MaineHealth
Center for Tobacco
Independence