



# MDwise

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## Smoking: Should I Take Medicine to Quit?

Making health decisions is part of life. These decisions can have a big effect on your health and happiness. Most people feel better about their health care when they take part in these decisions.

This information will help you understand your choices, whether you take part in the decision or ask your doctor to decide. Your decision should be based on the medical facts as well as your own feelings.

### Your choices

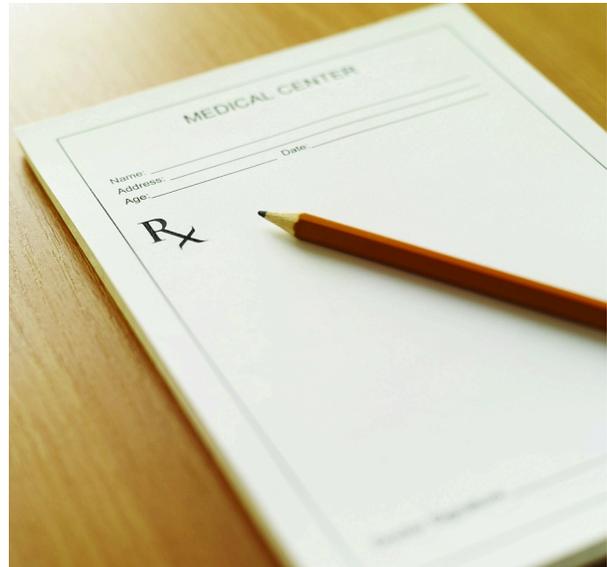
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- You can try to quit smoking without taking medicine.
- You can take medicine to help you deal with cravings and withdrawal symptoms, such as anxiety or getting irritated easily.

### Key points in making your decision

Today, you have the choice of using medicines to improve your chances of quitting. You can use nicotine replacement medicines, like gum and patches, that have nicotine in them. Or you can use medicines that do not have nicotine, such as varenicline and bupropion.

All of these medicines help ease your cravings and withdrawal symptoms. And they rarely cause serious side effects or addiction. These products do not have the unhealthy substances that are in cigarettes, such as tar and carbon monoxide.



Think about the following when making your decision:

- Studies show that taking nicotine replacement medicines or bupropion doubles your chances of quitting smoking.
- Studies show that varenicline doubles or triples your chances of quitting smoking.
- If you take varenicline, you can stop smoking a little bit at a time, which may increase your chance of quitting.
- Bupropion and varenicline cannot be taken without a prescription from your doctor.
- Some insurance companies, including certain Medicare and Medicaid programs, will pay for all or part of the cost of quit-smoking medicines.

- Nicotine replacement medicines like gum, lozenges, and inhalers can give quick relief for cravings.
- Nicotine gum, lozenges, and patches can be bought without a prescription.
- Nicotine patches do not give you quick relief for cravings. They are used once a day.
- The side effects of nicotine replacement medicines can include sore throat, upset stomach, skin rashes, and sleep problems.

- Dry mouth and sleep problems are the most common side effects of bupropion. Nausea and constipation are the most common side effects of varenicline.

Think about the facts and about what matters most to you. To help with your decision, take this information to your doctor and talk with him or her about your thoughts and feelings. Ask for more information if needed.

Reasons to take medicine to quit smoking	What to consider before choosing medicines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have cravings or withdrawal symptoms such as nervousness, feeling hungry, and feeling grumpy when you go too long without a cigarette.</li> <li>• You have tried to quit in the past without using medicine, but you started smoking again.</li> <li>• You want to make the best effort you can to quit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you have a history of seizures, mental health problems, or heart disease, see your doctor before choosing which medicine to use.</li> <li>• If you may get pregnant, see your doctor before choosing which medicine to use.</li> </ul>

Medicines have side effects and may not be right for everyone. Talk to your doctor about which medicine might be the best choice for you.

By using what you have just learned, you will be able to make a better decision about taking medicine to quit smoking.

- Learn the facts.
- Consider the benefits and risks of the different medicines.
- Ask about costs.
- Talk to your doctor.

### Where can you find out more?

**Smokefree.gov:** 1-800-QUITNOW  
(1-800-784-8669) [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)

**American Cancer Society:** 1-800-ACS-2345  
(1-800-227-2345) [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**National Cancer Institute:**  
1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)  
[www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

**American Lung Association:** 1-800-LUNG-USA  
(1-800-586-4872) [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)



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