

## Dispelling Myths about Nicotine Replacement Therapy

<http://www.smokefree.gov>

**Myth:** *Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) does not work.*

**Truth:** NRT does work. NRT can double a smoker's chances of quitting smoking.<sup>1,2,8</sup> The likelihood of staying quit for more than six months is increased when a smoker uses NRT according to the directions.<sup>8-9</sup>

**Myth:** *The nicotine in cigarettes is the same as the nicotine found in Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products, so I'm just trading one addiction for another.*

**Truth:** No, the products are different and the likelihood of long-term addiction to NRT is very low.<sup>1,2</sup> The nicotine found in NRT is regulated by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA).<sup>3</sup> The amount of nicotine in NRT is less than in cigarettes and it is delivered more slowly.<sup>4-6</sup> NRT products have a much lower risk of addiction than cigarettes.<sup>2, 7</sup>

**Myth:** *If I use NRT, I will experience no withdrawal symptoms or cravings from quitting smoking.*

**Truth:** NRT does reduce withdrawal symptoms associated with cigarette smoking. However, it may not completely eliminate them. The symptoms most helped by NRT include: irritability, frustration, anger, craving, hunger, anxiety, difficulty concentrating, restlessness, and insomnia.<sup>10</sup> NRT achieves the best results when combined with a personal quit plan.

**Myth:** *NRT causes disease.*

**Truth:** The effect of NRT on the body is not fully known, but NRT products are safer than cigarettes.<sup>2,7</sup> The negative health effects of cigarettes are proven.<sup>8,11,12</sup> Of the 4,000 chemicals found in tobacco smoke, over 60 are known to cause cancer.<sup>13</sup> By using NRT to quit smoking you reduce your exposure to many chemicals found in tobacco smoke.

**Myth:** *If I use one NRT product, I cannot use others.*

**Truth:** No, NRT products can be used alone or in combination.<sup>1,10,14</sup> Talk to your doctor before doing so.

**Myth:** *NRT is too expensive.*

**Truth:** Over time the cost of NRT is less expensive than the cost of cigarettes. NRT is generally used for a limited time, whereas cigarettes are typically consumed many years.<sup>6</sup> Compare the price of the NRT products to the average price of \$3.51 for a package of 20 cigarettes in South Carolina (lowest in the United States) and the \$5.96 for a package of 20 cigarettes in Alaska.<sup>9</sup>

NRT Product	Average Daily Cost <sup>10</sup>
Nicotine Nasal Spray	\$3.40
Nicotine Patches	\$3.91
Nicotine Lozenges	\$4.98
Nicotine Gum	\$5.81
Nicotine Inhaler	\$6.07

**Myth:** *Only healthy people can use NRT.*

**Truth:** Under the direction of your doctor most people can use NRT. Generally, NRT can be safely used by people with diabetes or high blood pressure and does not increase the risk of heart attacks.<sup>6,15-27</sup> Talk to your doctor to determine if NRT is the right choice for your quit plan.

## References

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