



Over-the-Counter Medication: Nicotine Gum (Nicorette®)



Nicotine Gum

Type: Short-acting medicine

Brands: Nicorette®, generics

Cost: About \$5-8 per day,
\$150-240 per month

How does nicotine gum work?

- The nicotine patch helps users stop smoking by taking the edge off cigarette cravings without providing the other harmful substances found in cigarettes.
- Nicotine gum delivers nicotine through the mucous membranes in the mouth. The nicotine reaches the brain more slowly than if it were inhaled through a cigarette. This makes the “hit” less intense.
- Nicotine gum is available in 2mg and 4mg strengths. The 2mg doses are recommended for people who smoke 24 or fewer cigarettes per day, while the 4mg doses are recommended for people who smoke 25 or more cigarettes per day.
- People typically chew one piece each hour, but more gum may be chewed during a craving.
- The recommended period for use is one to months. A health care provider may suggest shorter or longer treatments for individuals. Follow his or her instructions.

What are the directions for use?

- Place a piece of nicotine gum in the mouth. Chew the gum a few times to break it down until a tingling sensation occurs. Then place the nicotine gum between the cheek and gum and leave it there. If a user chews without holding it in their gums, the nicotine will be released directly into the saliva, which may cause a stomach ache or throat irritation. Continue this routine for 30 minutes.
- Do not swallow nicotine gum.
- Avoid food and beverages during nicotine gum use, and for 15 minutes before and after.
- Use the gum every day for about a month, then slowly start to reduce the number of pieces that

are chewed per day to avoid withdrawal symptoms.

- Do not use more than 24 doses of gum per day.
- Do not smoke during use.

What are the advantages of nicotine gum?

- Nicotine gum is available over the counter in several flavors and satisfies cravings quickly.
- This medication also keeps the mouth occupied.

What are the disadvantages?

- It is more difficult to chew than normal chewing gum.

What are the side-effects?

- Some users have experienced an unpleasant taste, throat irritation, tooth/jaw soreness, mouth sores and a rapid heart rate.
- Nicotine gum may cause damage to dentures or other dental work.

What precautions are associated with nicotine gum?

- The FDA classified nicotine gum as a category “D” drug (high risk to the fetus) for use during pregnancy. Pregnant women who smoke should discuss using nicotine gum with a health care provider.

These are a few of the most common side-effects and interactions. If you have questions or have problems when using this medicine, contact your doctor/pharmacist.

Adapted from Asthma and COPD Center of the University of Chicago, and from Pharmacological Product Guide: FDA-Approved Medications, The Regents of the University of California, August 2009.