

Plain Language Summary

Title: Medications to help quit smoking

Name: Elisabeth Bloomberg MS4

Plain Language Summary:

Why should I stop smoking?

You may have heard that smoking is bad for you. It can lead to many diseases, including heart attacks, strokes, lung cancer, and emphysema. The good news is that if you stop smoking, many of these bad effects can be stopped or even reversed. It is never too late to stop smoking, and your doctor can help.



How can my doctor help?

Your doctor can discuss ways to help you quit on your own. He or she can also suggest counseling and support services to help. Also, there are many medicines that your doctor can prescribe that will make it easier to stop smoking. Medicines that are useful to help quit are varenicline (Chantix), bupropion (Wellbutrin), and nicotine replacement.

Which one should I take?

Any of these medications can help you stop smoking. Varenicline works a little bit better than the other two options. The one that you choose will depend on which one you and your doctor prefer.

Varenicline

Varenicline is a medicine which is also called Chantix. It blocks some of the effects of nicotine in your body. It also imitates some of the effects. This decreases the craving for cigarettes. You start taking it one week before you stop smoking, and continue taking it for twelve weeks. It is started at a low dose, and then increased to a higher dose. You can continue to take it even if you have not completely stopped smoking. It should make smoking feel less good. People can often have nausea or nightmares with this medication. If these do not bother you too much, keep taking it. People can also rarely feel depressed or even want to hurt themselves while taking this. If that happens, stop taking it.

Bupropion

Bupropion, which is also called Wellbutrin, is a medicine that can also be used for depression. It decreases your craving for cigarettes. You start taking this medicine two weeks before you stop smoking. This gives it time to build up in your body. This medicine is a little bit less effective than varenicline, but it has fewer bad side effects. You should not take this medicine if you get seizures.

Nicotine Replacement

Nicotine is the chemical that makes cigarettes addictive. It is difficult to quit smoking because your body gets used to the nicotine in cigarettes. Nicotine replacement is nicotine in a patch, a gum, a spray, or other forms. You take it instead of smoking, and your body still gets the nicotine it wants. The most effective way to do this is to use a nicotine patch which stays on your body all day. Then, use nicotine gum when you get cravings. Using nicotine replacement this way is as effective as using varenicline. You should not smoke and take nicotine replacement at the same time. This may cause too much nicotine in your blood. Start using nicotine replacement when you quit smoking.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/tobacco/helpsmokers.htm>

This covers the ways that you can quit smoking.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/smoking-cessation/SK00055>

Information from the Mayo Clinic on creating a quit plan.

<http://www.cancer.org/Healthy/StayAwayfromTobacco/GuidetoQuittingSmoking/index>

American Cancer Society Guide to Quitting Smoking

Key Words:

Smoking

Nicotine

Medications to stop smoking

Nicotine replacement

This document was created by a medical student enrolled in the Family Medicine Clerkship at the University of Minnesota Medical School as part of the course project. The aim of the project is to present information on a medical topic in the format of a patient education handout. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Minnesota Medical School physicians and faculty. These materials are provided for informational purposes only and are in no way intended to take the place of the advice and recommendations of your personal health care provider. The information provided may no longer be up-to-date since it has not been reviewed since the date of creation. The information provided should not be used to diagnose a health problem or disease, or as a means of determining treatment. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately contact a doctor or call 911.