

## Summary

Smoking is harmful to our health. It causes cancer, lung disease and heart disease. People with mental health problems die 15 to 20 years earlier than others in the UK. The main reason for this is smoking.

Quitting smoking is the single most important way to improve your health and wellbeing.

Using a smoking cessation medication such as varenicline and behavioural support is the best way to quit smoking.

This leaflet contains information about Varenicline.

## For more information

Speak to staff in your care team or ask to see a smoking cessation specialist.

Our email and webpage are here:  
[smokefreeready@slam.nhs.uk](mailto:smokefreeready@slam.nhs.uk)  
[www.slam.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/smokefree)

## Why are we smoke free?

South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust has a duty to promote health and wellbeing.

Smoking is the biggest preventable cause of early death.

We also have to comply with the Health Act (2006) and with NICE guidance on smoking (2013).

Our staff have been trained to deliver the best treatments for managing nicotine dependence.

Being smoke free means all patients benefit from improved health and wellbeing. Anyone who stops smoking might find that their medication works better and they can reduce their dose.

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Ask if you need a large print, audio, Braille or translated version of this leaflet.

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[www.slam.nhs.uk](http://www.slam.nhs.uk)

**Stop smoking  
medication**

**Nicotine  
patches**



[www.slam.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/smokefree)

## What are nicotine patches?

Nicotine patches are also known as NRT or Nicotine Replacement Therapy patches.

They look like square plasters and replace some of the nicotine you would get from a cigarette.

You may still get cravings but patches take the edge off.

Using the patch can help reduce nicotine withdrawal symptoms such as restlessness, low mood, or poor concentration.

## Are nicotine patches safe?

The smoke produced from burning tobacco contains about 4000 ingredients, 70 of these are known to cause cancer. Since NRT patches do not contain tobacco and are not burnt they are much safer than cigarettes.

## Are there any side effects from using nicotine patches?

Site reactions are common in the first two weeks, including rash, itching, burning, tingling, numbness, swelling, pain, and hives.

These go after you remove the patch. You might have disturbed sleep and vivid dreams if you do not remove the patch before bedtime.

## How do you use the patch?

Remove the backing from the patch and apply to non-hairy, dry skin on upper arm or chest. Press down for 20 seconds. Do not apply to broken or inflamed skin. Remove the patch before bedtime. Use a different site each day for new patch.

## Which nicotine patch should you use?

Nicotine patches come in three different strengths:

- If you smoke less than 10 cigarettes a day use the 7 or 10mg patch.
- If you smoke 11 to 20 cigarettes a day use the 14 or 15mg patch.
- If you smoke more than 20 cigarettes a day or smoke within 30 minutes of waking use the 21mg or 25mg patch.

## What if you still have nicotine withdrawal symptoms?

Tell your team if the nicotine patch does not manage your cravings.

They will help you to consider using a higher strength patch, or two patches or using an additional nicotine replacement therapy product.

## Can you smoke while wearing a nicotine patch?

Yes you can smoke while wearing a nicotine patch.

When you are ready to cut down or quit, increase the strength or amount of patches you use.

## How long should you use nicotine patches for?

Most smokers use patches for at least three months. It is safe to use nicotine replacement therapy for up to five years.



## What else should you know about patches?

On the first day of using the patch, it can take up to 10 hours for the nicotine level to peak in your blood.

To keep your nicotine level stable, change the patch every 24 hours.

It can take up to seven days for your nicotine level to stabilise.