

# COUGHS, COLDS AND SMOKING

Including stopping smoking in  
conversations in the pharmacy



Smokers are 12% more likely to suffer  
from respiratory infections than non-smokers<sup>1</sup>

Smokers are  
more likely to  
get colds **more  
frequently**<sup>1-3</sup>



In smokers,  
the infection  
may **persist  
for longer**<sup>4</sup>



In smokers,  
symptoms tend  
to be **more  
severe**<sup>3</sup>



## Initiating the quitting conversation

Based on the link between acute coughs, colds and smoking, you could use cough and cold conversations in the pharmacy as an opportunity to explore whether your customer is a smoker, and whether they are ready to quit smoking to improve their health.

You can do this by following the three steps  
set out in **Very Brief Advice on smoking**:<sup>5</sup>

**ASK**  
if they smoke



**ADVISE**  
on the most effective way  
of quitting



**ACT**  
on your customer's response



For example, you could say:

"As smokers  
tend to struggle more  
with coughs, understanding  
your smoking history could  
help me give you the best  
advice. Do you smoke?"

If the answer is **yes**, you could  
find out whether your customer is ready  
to quit smoking.

# SMOKING AND THE RESPIRATORY SYSTEM



## Smoker's cough

If your customer is a smoker and they have had a cough for a long time, they may have been advised that it is a 'smoker's cough'. This is caused by mucus build-up that cannot be cleared sufficiently by damaged cilia (hairlike structures) which line the lungs.<sup>6,7</sup> However, other potential causes of your customer's cough should still be considered.

### Red flags

When advising customers with a cough, keep an eye out for red flags that indicate a referral may be required.

#### Refer your customer to their GP if they have any of the following:<sup>8</sup>

- A cough that has persisted for 3+ weeks
- A cough that's accompanied by unexplained weight loss
- A weakened immune system

#### Refer your customer for an urgent GP appointment, or to NHS 111, if they:<sup>8</sup>

- Have a severe cough or one that is getting worse quickly
- Feel very unwell
- Have chest pain or swollen glands
- Find it hard to breathe
- Are coughing up blood



### Compared to non-smokers, smokers are:<sup>9</sup>

**2x** more likely to get pneumonia

**4x** more likely to develop COPD

**11x** more likely to develop lung cancer

# NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY



If your customer is a smoker who has expressed an interest in wanting to quit, you can discuss nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) with them.

The majority of stop smoking attempts using willpower alone will fail,<sup>10</sup> but using NRT, such as Nicorette Quickmist mouthspray, can double their chances of quitting for good.<sup>11</sup>

NRT is generally well-tolerated<sup>12</sup> and there are various formats and strengths available to suit your customer's individual needs and preferences. Combination NRT, which involves using a long-acting patch plus a short-acting format, is associated with a higher chance of quitting smoking.<sup>13</sup>

## COMBINATION NRT IS 27% MORE EFFECTIVE THAN SINGLE NRT<sup>13</sup>



Combination NRT is recommended by NICE as a first-line treatment option.<sup>14</sup> There is currently no evidence of drug interactions or side effects with concomitant use of NRT and common cough and cold medications, but check the BNF so you can reassure your customer about their concomitant use. Quitting smoking may affect the metabolism of some medication, so do check whether any dose adjustments may be required.

## Health benefits of stopping smoking

You can share some health benefits that customers may experience, to help them stay motivated to quit.<sup>15</sup>



### After 20 minutes:

Heart rate is already starting to return to normal

### After 48 hours:

All carbon monoxide is flushed out and lungs are clearing out mucus. Sense of taste and smell is improving

### After 2 to 12 weeks:

Circulation has improved so blood is pumping through to heart and muscles much better

### After 1 year:

Risk of heart attack has halved compared with a smoker's

### After 8 hours:

Oxygen levels are recovering, with harmful carbon monoxide levels in the blood already reduced by half

### After 72 hours:

Bronchial tubes have started to relax to make breathing feel easier. Energy levels will be increasing

### After 3 to 9 months:

Lung function is increasing

### After 10 years

Risk of death from lung cancer has halved compared with a smoker's



## References

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**Nicorette Invisi Patch. Presentation:** Transdermal patches releasing a nominal of 25mg, 15mg or 10mg of nicotine per 16 hours. **Uses:** Nicorette Invisi patch relieves and/or prevents cravings and nicotine withdrawal symptoms associated with tobacco dependence. It is indicated to aid smokers wishing to quit or reduce prior to quitting, to assist smokers who are unwilling or unable to smoke, and as a safer alternative to smoking for smokers and those around them. **Legal category:** GSL. **PL holder:** McNeil Products Limited, 50-100 Holmers Farm way, High Wycombe, HP12 4EG. Information about this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contraindications, and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/search?q=invisi+patch>

**Nicorette Cools 2mg Lozenge, Nicorette Cools 4mg Lozenge, Nicorette Fruit 2mg Lozenge. Presentation:** Each lozenge contains 2mg or 4mg of nicotine. **Uses:** Nicorette lozenges relieves and/or prevents cravings and nicotine withdrawal symptoms associated with tobacco dependence. It is indicated to aid smokers wishing to quit or reduce prior to quitting, to assist smokers who are unwilling or unable to smoke, and as a safer alternative to smoking for smokers and those around them. **Legal category:** GSL. **PL holder:** McNeil Products Limited, 50-100 Holmers Farm Way, High Wycombe, HP12 4EG, UK. Information about these products, including adverse reactions, precautions, contraindications, and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/search?q=Nicorette+lozenge>

**Nicorette QuickMist 1mg/spray mouthspray, Nicorette QuickMist Cool Berry 1mg/spray mouthspray & Nicorette QuickMist SmartTrack 1mg/spray mouthspray. Presentation:** Each 0.07ml contains 1mg nicotine corresponding to 1 mg nicotine/spray dose. **Excipients with known effect:** ethanol, propylene glycol, butylated hydroxytoluene. **Uses:** Nicorette QuickMist and QuickMist SmartTrack relieves and/or prevents cravings and nicotine withdrawal symptoms associated with tobacco dependence. It is indicated to aid smokers wishing to quit or reduce prior to quitting, to assist smokers who are unwilling or unable to smoke, and as a safer alternative to smoking for smokers and those around them. **Legal category:** GSL. **PL holder:** McNeil Products Ltd, 50-100 Holmers Farm Way, High Wycombe, HP12 4EG. Information about these products, including adverse reactions, precautions, contraindications, and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/search?q=nicorette+mouthspray>

**Nicorette Gum. Presentation:** Chewing gum containing 2 or 4mg of nicotine. **Uses:** Nicorette Gum relieves and/or prevents cravings and nicotine withdrawal symptoms associated with tobacco dependence. It is indicated to aid smokers wishing to quit or reduce prior to quitting, to assist smokers who are unwilling or unable to smoke, and as a safer alternative to smoking for smokers and those around them. **Legal category:** GSL. **PL holder:** McNeil Products Ltd, 50-100 Holmers Farm Way, High Wycombe, HP12 4EG. Information about this product, including adverse reactions, precautions, contraindications, and method of use can be found at: <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/search?q=Nicorette+Gum>

Adverse events should be reported. Reporting forms and information can be found at [www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard](http://www.mhra.gov.uk/yellowcard). Adverse events should also be reported to McNeil Products Limited on 01344 864 042.