

The use of FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) can increase the likelihood of a person quitting tobacco by 50-70% when the products are used effectively.<sup>1</sup> It is important to highlight the benefits of proper NRT use to reduce common side effects patients may experience.<sup>1</sup>

## NRT Side Effects

Potential side effects from using NRT vary depending on the product. Some side effects occur from improper use of NRT products or NRT dosages being too high or too low. If you hear from patients who are experiencing side effects, ask them to describe how they have been using their NRT.

- It's important to discuss NRT side effects with patients; while side effects can occur, they can often be resolved with proper use or changing dosage strength.<sup>1</sup>
- Patients using gum may report gastrointestinal side effects from use. Instruction on "parking" and chewing gum can resolve this.<sup>1</sup>
- Patients using patches may report sleep disturbances or insomnia. Instruct patients to remove their patch 1-2 hours before bed and apply a fresh patch upon awakening the next day.<sup>1</sup>
- Patients using patches may report skin irritation or itchiness, which can often be treated with hydrocortisone cream. Additionally, patients should move patches to different sides and areas of the upper body daily to reduce skin irritation.<sup>1</sup> Skin irritation may also indicate needing to lower NRT dose.<sup>1</sup>

### KEY POINTS

- **NRT can increase the likelihood of a person quitting by 50-70% when used effectively.**
- **It's important to highlight the benefits and side effects a patient may experience when using NRT.**

## Tips For Discussing NRT with Patients

- Discuss nicotine withdrawal symptoms when quitting tobacco products. These include but are not limited to depression, irritability, difficulty concentrating, increase in appetite, restlessness, trouble sleeping and weight gain.<sup>2</sup>
  - Often, concern over withdrawal symptoms results in a decreased intention to quit tobacco, as well as relapse in using tobacco.<sup>2</sup>
  - Promote how proper use of NRT is helpful in reducing withdrawal symptoms.<sup>1</sup>
- Ask patients if they have a preference on type of NRT or pharmacotherapy.
  - Ask whether they have used any NRT products in the past. If so, what was that experience like? How did they use those products? How long did they use them?
- Ask patients about their tobacco use habits; NRT dosage is connected to both frequency of use and duration of use throughout the day.

### References:

- 1) Phillips C, Pechman C, Calder D, Prochaska JJ. Understanding Hesitation to Use Nicotine Replacement Therapy: A Content Analysis of Posts in Online Tobacco-Cessation Support Groups. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2023; 37(1): 30-38. Doi: 10.1177/08901171221113835
- 2) Robinson JD, Li L, Chen M, et al. Evaluating the Temporal Relationships Between Withdrawal Symptoms and Smoking Relapse. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*. 2019; 33(2): 105-116. Doi: 10.1037/adb0000434