

# Using the Nicotine Gum



California  
Smokers'  
Helpline  
1-800-NO-BUTTS

Nicorette® is a sugar-free nicotine gum used to help smokers slowly get off nicotine. When chewed correctly, and used on a regular schedule, it supplies a steady stream of nicotine to the body through the lining of the mouth. This may help reduce the withdrawal symptoms that occur during the first weeks of quitting smoking.



## Obtaining the Gum:

It is available at most drugstores, either over the counter or by prescription. The cost is about \$55 for a starter pack (108 pieces) and \$33 for a refill (48 pieces). Some insurance companies will cover the cost but may require a prescription and enrollment in an approved smoking cessation program.

## The Right Dose:

Talk to your doctor first. A general guide is:

- If you smoke more than 25 cigarettes per day, start with 4 mg.
- If you smoke less than 25 cigarettes per day, start with 2 mg.

Also, pay attention to how many pieces you use. Too much nicotine may cause nervousness, dizziness, nausea, shakiness, insomnia, or headache. A dose that is too low may not reduce withdrawal symptoms enough.

## Getting Started:

Upon quitting smoking, begin using the gum on a regular schedule, NOT at every craving. Chew a piece until there is a peppery taste, then “park” it between your gum and cheek until the peppery taste is gone. Repeat this process (placing it in different parts of the mouth) until the gum loses

its taste. The nicotine gets into your bloodstream during the time the gum is “parked,” so make sure not to keep chewing it like you would bubble gum.

## The Right Schedule:

A 10-12 week program is recommended, as outlined below:

Weeks 1-6:	1 piece every 1-2 hours.
Weeks 7-9:	1 piece every 2-4 hours.
Weeks 10-12:	1 piece every 4-8 hours.

- Do not use more than 24 pieces a day.
- Talk with your doctor about the schedule that will work best for you.

## Potential Problems:

- Using the gum while pregnant may cause problems. Talk with your doctor first.
- You may not like the taste.
- The gum may irritate your mouth or stomach, so try not to suck on it.
- Acidic foods and drinks (like tomatoes and orange juice) can lower the gum’s effectiveness. Ask your pharmacist what foods and drinks to avoid.

## Remember:

You’re doing the work, not the gum. Nicotine gum is just a tool to help. Make sure you plan for trigger situations. And give yourself credit for every day you don’t smoke!