



What can help me quit smoking?

For many people, willpower alone is not enough.

But there are a number of pharmaceutical products that may help.

This booklet briefly details the three major types available in Wales.

Please consult a smoking-cessation counsellor, pharmacist, and/or GP before using any of these treatments.

Photo by Thomas Hawk, Flickr.

Nicotine-replacement therapy (NRT)

What is nicotine and what does it do?

Nicotine is found naturally in tobacco and tobacco smoke. It's highly addictive and its absence can cause withdrawal symptoms in regular users.

How do I know I am addicted to nicotine?

You're probably addicted to nicotine if you:

- need to smoke soon after you wake up, or in the middle of the night
- feel on edge, have cravings to smoke or find it hard to concentrate when you haven't had a cigarette for a while
- are used to smoking at least 20 cigarettes a day

If you feel you are addicted to nicotine, and you want to give up smoking, NRT can help.

What does NRT do?

NRT gives you a regular, low dose of the nicotine your body is missing. This way, you don't feel the need to smoke.

For example the nicotine from a nicotine patch is absorbed slowly through the skin. This helps to reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms you experience when you quit smoking.

If your body has become dependent

on nicotine, then using nicotine-replacement therapy can double your chance of quitting. NRT is normally used for up to three months, reducing the dosage over time. This means you can gradually adjust to life without smoking.

Is NRT safe?

It is when used according to the instructions. Some people have minor reactions against some forms of NRT (like mouth irritation or a rash). Other symptoms (like headaches, coughing, or a poor complexion) can be the result of your body getting rid of tobacco poisons.

Seek medical advice if you are concerned. If you suffer from a condition like heart disease, diabetes, or stomach ulcers, or if you're pregnant or breastfeeding, ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice about using NRT and which type to choose.



Zyban

What is Zyban?

“Zyban” is the trade name of a drug called “bupropion hydrochloride”. It was first developed as an antidepressant, but also helps people who are trying to quit smoking. It was the first non-nicotine-based medicine to be licensed for prescription to help people quit smoking.

What does it do?

Zyban can reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms associated with quitting. It can also help prevent the weight-gain people often experience when they quit.

Does it work?

Two published studies have shown that it greatly increases smokers' chances of quitting. The results from these studies are very encouraging, but more research is needed.

Based on the evidence available, Zyban has been made available for NHS doctors to prescribe. When used as advised by your doctor, it can be safe and effective.

Where can I get it?

Zyban is only available on prescription from a GP.

Can anyone use it?

Zyban is not recommended for:
pregnant or breastfeeding women

- those under 18
- those with liver or kidney problems

- those with epilepsy
- those with eating disorders or certain kinds of mental illness

Zyban can react with a number of other medicines, including ones bought without a prescription. So it's important to tell your doctor what you're taking before they prescribe it for you, and to tell your doctor or pharmacist that you're taking Zyban before you take any new medicines.

Are there side effects?

Some people may experience side effects after using Zyban. These can include a dry mouth, sleeplessness, headaches, dizziness, depression, and sweating.

People who experience side effects should seek their doctor's advice.

How does Zyban compare with NRT?

NRT can be bought over the counter, but Zyban must be prescribed. This is because of the possible side-effects.

Your doctor will advise you on the most suitable treatment for you.

Because they work in different ways, if you're prescribed Zyban, you can still use NRT to help deal with cravings.



Champix

What is Champix?

“Champix” is the trade name of a drug called “varenicline”. It is a non-nicotine-based medicine designed to help people quit smoking.

It is available as a tablet, usually taken once a day, building up to a stronger dose taken twice a day after a week. People start taking it one to two weeks before they plan to quit smoking, and it is usually taken for about three months.

What does it do?

It can help reduce the cravings and withdrawal symptoms associated with quitting. Also, if someone taking Champix smokes a cigarette, they may find it less satisfying than usual.

Does it work?

Published research shows that Champix does increase smokers' chances of quitting smoking. The results from these studies are very encouraging, but more research is needed.

Based on the evidence, Champix has been licensed for use in the NHS in Wales as a prescription option.

Where can I get it?

Champix is available on prescription in Wales from your doctor.

Can anyone use it?

It is not recommended for:

- children under the age of 18
- pregnant women or during

breast-feeding

- anyone who may be allergic to varenicline or any of the other ingredients

People with kidney diseases should use it with care.

It is important that you tell your doctor what other medicines you're taking (including those bought without a prescription) before they prescribe Champix, and to tell your doctor or pharmacist that you're taking Champix before you take any new medicines.

Are there side effects?

Some people experience nausea, sleeping difficulties, and/or headaches.

People who experience side effects should seek their doctor's advice.

How does Champix compare with NRT and Zyban?

Research shows that the best success rates are achieved through specialist advice and support from trained professionals in combination with the use of medications like Champix, Zyban, and/or NRT.

In clinical trials, Champix was found to be more effective than Zyban.

NRT can be bought over the counter or on prescription, while Champix and Zyban are only available on prescription. Your doctor or pharmacist can offer advice as to which is the most suitable product and form of delivery for you.



Cessation services

What are cessation services?

Smoking-cessation services provide counselling and support to smokers who want to quit, complementing aids like NRT, Zyban, and/or Champix.

They provide group or one-to-one sessions, depending on local circumstances and clients' preferences. Most advisers are nurses or pharmacists, and all have received training for their role.

Do they work?

Yes. Using the support of your local service makes it four times more likely that you will quit and not go back.

If you require more information or support, these services can help:

Smokers' Helpline Wales
0800 169 0 169

This NHS helpline provides advice to anyone who wants to quit.

Stop Smoking Wales
0800 085 2219

Call this number to arrange to join a group or one-to-one session in your area.

Quit
0800 00 22 00

Quit provides a freephone Pregnancy Quitline service, and freephone Asian Quitline services in Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, and Urdu.



About ASH Wales

ASH Wales is the leading voluntary organisation in Wales tackling tobacco use. Our main aim is to achieve a reduction in and eventual elimination of the health problems associated with tobacco use.

ASH Wales does not endorse the use of any particular drug regime. The choice of whether a drug therapy is required, and/or which drug therapy to use is a clinical one best made by the relevant health practitioner with reference to the needs and wishes of the client.

For more information, visit ashwales.org.uk/quit-smoking

