

## I am ready to quit.

I have set my quit date.  
I have a plan to deal with cravings.  
I am ready.

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How can nicotine patches help me stop using tobacco?



Tobacco stimulates the nicotine receptors in your brain. When you quit tobacco, these receptors still want nicotine, which causes cravings. Using nicotine patches can reduce these cravings and help you reach your goal.

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### SLOW and Steady win the Race

#### Sometimes SLOW is BETTER!

Patches work differently than tobacco. Tobacco delivers nicotine to the brain quickly (BING! 7-11 seconds). This only lasts for a short time, then you crave another dose of tobacco. Nicotine patches deliver nicotine **SLOWLY** over a longer period of time. This constant, slow delivery of nicotine helps to decrease the craving for tobacco.



**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Harford County  
Health Department**

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## Using Nicotine Patches To Get Quit



Harford County  
Health Department

*"Healthy People in a Healthy Environment"*

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## How do I use Nicotine Patches?

- ◆ STOP  using all tobacco products when you start using the nicotine patch.
- ◆ Apply **only one**  patch every day to clean, dry, hairless skin.
- ◆ Do not apply lotion, oil or sunscreen before applying the patch.
- ◆ The patch can be placed on any non-hairy part of the body - usually above the waist.
- ◆ To avoid a skin reaction to the adhesive apply the patch to a **NEW site** every day.
- ◆ Peel backing from patch and press onto skin. Hold or rub for at least 30 seconds. 
- ◆ Wash your hands after applying patches to avoid getting nicotine in your eyes
- ◆ Patches may be worn for 16 to 24 hours. If morning cravings are  intense, wear patch for 24 hours. **Do not wear patches for more than 24 hours.**
- ◆ After removing patch, fold the sticky side together and dispose in the trash.
- ◆ **NICOTINE IS A POISON!**  Used patches are dangerous for children and pets. Dispose properly. **Do NOT cut the patch into smaller pieces.** 



### Which patch do I use?

The first weeks of patches will have a higher amount of nicotine to help decrease cravings. As you get used to not smoking, you will step down to a lower level of nicotine. **The amount of time at each step will vary from person to person.** Your doctor will consider your health status and daily medications to help you determine which strength is right for you.

If you smoke **10 or more** cigarettes per day you will usually start with step 1 or step 2

**Step 1-** start with a 21mg/day patch.

You will continue to use this patch every day for up to 6 weeks.

**Step 2:** Step down to a 14mg/day patch. You will continue using this patch every day for 2-3 weeks.

**Step 3:** Step down to a 7mg/day patch. You will continue using this patch every day for 2-3 weeks.

If you smoke **less than 10** cigarettes per day you will usually start with Step 2 for 6 weeks then step down to step 3.

## Frequently asked Questions

### Q: What are common side effects of Nicotine Patches?

A: Side effects of nicotine patches are usually mild. Some people develop skin irritation from the adhesive of the patch. This can be avoided by applying the patch to a new site every day. If you develop a slight rash it can be treated with an over the counter steroid cream called hydrocortisone. If a rash lasts longer than 4 days, has swelling or blistering you should see your doctor.

### Q: What if I have bizarre or vivid dreams?

A: This can be reduced by removing the patch one hour prior to bedtime.

### Q: Can a patch be placed over a tattoo?

A: It is recommended to **not** place patches on tattooed skin.

### Q: What if my skin is very hairy?

A: Use a small pair of scissors to cut the hair back enough to apply a patch.

### Q: Can my patch get wet?

A: Yes. You can bathe or swim for short periods of time while wearing the patch.

### Q: What if I have nausea or feel jittery?

A: Nausea and feeling jittery are both symptoms of nicotine withdraw. Try to decrease caffeine intake. If these symptoms persist or are severe, stop using the patch and contact your doctor.