

# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THE NICOTINE PATCH

Nicotine patch is a safe method to reduce cravings for cigarettes when used as directed. You can buy the patch over the counter without a prescription or get it through insurance such as Medi-Cal. Nicotine patch does not cause cancer or heart attacks like smoking cigarettes. The patch delivers small amounts of nicotine through your skin. The patch will help you to quit smoking and eventually nicotine altogether. The patch won't give you the exact same feeling as cigarettes – it is not a complete substitute. It WILL reduce your cravings and keep you comfortable while you are in the process of quitting.

## HOW DO I GET READY TO USE THE PATCH?

### 1. Talk to your doctor about using a patch, especially if

- Have had a heart attack in the last 2 weeks;
- Are pregnant or nursing;
- Have severe heart rhythm problems;
- Have angina, a chest pain in the area of your heart.

Do NOT use the patch without a Doctor's specific recommendation if you have any of the above conditions.

### 2. Get the patch in the proper amount before you quit smoking.

- Starting the patch a few days before your quit time may increase the chance of success
- The patch comes in doses for 2 weeks at a time. Get more before you run out.
- Nicotine patch (covered by Medi-Cal, but not Medicare) usually comes in: 21 mg, 14 mg, or 7 mg

	Week 1-6	Week 7-8	Week 9-10
More than 10 cigs	21 mg	14 mg	7mg
10 cigs or less	14mg	7mg	

## HOW DO I USE THE PATCH?

*Before using the patch, read all of the instructions carefully. If you have any questions, talk to your health care provider.*

1. Open the patch package with scissors. Peel off the protective cover. Try not to touch the sticky side of the patch as you put it on a hairless part of your body, between your neck and your waist. Press firmly for ten seconds to make it stick.
2. Put on a new patch each morning to a relatively hairless spot on the upper chest, back, or outer arm (shave if necessary, but do not put the patch over a cut in the skin). Use a fresh patch every day, as it loses strength after 24 hours.
3. Put the patch on a different spot each day to be easier on the skin. Try not to reuse the same spot for 2 weeks. When you do reuse the spot, change it a little. Don't put patches on

areas where you have used lotions and creams. These areas may prevent the patch from sticking. If the patch falls off, put on another one. If this continues to happen, try putting tape (such as sports tape) or ace bandage to secure it.

4. Wash your hands after handling new or used patches. Nicotine on your hands may get into your eyes and nose and cause redness, irritation, itching, or more serious problems. Nicotine is poisonous if swallowed.
5. The patches should be folded in half and thrown away out of reach of children and pets.
6. Water will not harm the patch if it is put on right. You can bathe, swim, and shower while the patch is on. If your patch falls off during the day, put on a new patch.

### Tips for Nicotine Patch

1. **Combining your patch with a faster acting form of NRT (ie. gum or lozenge) or Wellbutrin (Bupropion) increases your chance of success.**
2. **Leave the patch on overnight** if you normally smoked in the middle of the night, or first thing in the morning. Vivid dreams may happen. If this is a problem, try taking off the patch an hour before bedtime.
3. **If your skin gets red, develops a rash, or is itching** so much that it is bothering you, buy 1% hydrocortisone cream in the drug store and put a little bit on the red areas 2-3 times a day. Do not use the hydrocortisone cream under the patch. Call your doctor if problems persists more than 4 days. You can also use baby oil to remove all the adhesive from your arm. Do not use the patch on the same spot for two weeks. Try a different brand of patch.
4. **Smoking cigarettes while using the patch may prevent you from quitting smoking and could be harmful.** If you continue to smoke or have urges to smoke while using the patch, you may need a higher dosage patch or you may need to add nicotine gum or lozenges to keep the cravings down. Consult your doctor, or cessation counselor right away.
5. **Don't stop using the patch before the recommended time.** Even if you feel better in a couple of days, continue to use the patch. The patch will keep you comfortable and reduce cravings as you are quitting. It is important to use the patch for the full 6 to 8 weeks.

#### Warning! Too much Nicotine can cause:

Nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, Rapid heartbeat, Cold Sweats, Blurred Vision, Dizziness, Headaches, and Drooling

If you are having any of these symptoms, stop using the patch and talk to your healthcare provider.