

Smoking & NRT in Long-Term Care



DID YOU KNOW? Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances.

If a resident is asking to smoke they are expressing a need which may be physiological or psychological.

If a person has smoked one pack of 25 cigarettes every day for 40 years, that's:

- over 365,000 cigarettes
- over 4,380,000 hand to mouth repetitions



Imagine how difficult it is to quit smoking especially as an older adult with dementia who has to moved to long term care and is now unable to access cigarettes.



BENEFITS OF QUITTING



After: Health benefits include:

- 20 minutes → Blood pressure, pulse, and hand/feet temperature return to normal
- 8 hours → Nicotine and carbon monoxide levels in blood reduce by half, oxygen levels return to normal
- 24 hours → Carbon monoxide will be eliminated from the body, lungs start to clear out mucus and other smoking debris
- 48 hours → Changes of having a heart attack start to go down, nerve endings start to re-grow, and ability to taste and smell improves
- 72 hours → Breathing becomes easier, bronchial tubes relax, energy levels increase
- 2-12 weeks → Circulation improves, breathing improves, walking becomes easier as circulation improves, wound healing is greatly improved.
- 3-9 months → Coughing, wheezing and breathing problems improve and lung function increases by up to 10-30%
- 1 year → Risk of smoking-related heart attack is cut in half
- 10 years → Risk of lung cancer is cut in half

WHAT IS WITHDRAWAL?

- When a person develops a tolerance to nicotine, they usually need more of the substance in order to get the same effect
- They may develop a dependence to nicotine so when they stop smoking, their bodies go through withdrawal and they may become sick. The person may experience a great deal of discomfort without the nicotine. This may be the reason for some behavioral expressions as well as physical symptoms.
- A person with dementia may not be able to verbalize that they are in withdrawal from nicotine.
- When a person with nicotine dependence comes to long-term care and is unable to go out to smoke safely, we can assist them to be comfortable, safe, and avoid the difficult withdrawal from nicotine through **nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)**.

WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of nicotine withdrawal include:

- irritability
- anger
- agitation
- headache
- anxiety
- difficulty concentrating
- restlessness
- difficulty sleeping

NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT)

NRT can be used...

- Even if there is NO long-term goal to quit smoking
- When the resident is not ready or able to quit smoking
- To reduce smoking
- To reduce smoking related agitation/ behaviours

The nicotine in NRT is not harmful to the resident.

Other alternatives to smoking

- Having many opportunities to connect with friends in a non smoking environment
- Fresh air breaks in non smoking areas (e.g. balconies)
- Sweet alternatives for non -diabetic residents:
 - Sometimes sugar, candy or chocolate can help with cravings for a cigarette
 - A small cup of soda/juice may help with urges to smoke
 - Lollipops may help as the hand to mouth motion is similar to smoking

NRT THERAPIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:



Nicotine spray*

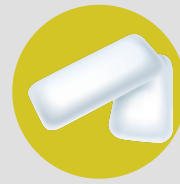
- Quick and effective, works in 30-120 seconds

* short acting NRTs can be used for resident's who smoke less cigarettes or when the patch cannot be tolerated



Nicotine inhaler*

- Allows for similar hand to mouth motion as smoking does
- Should be kept at nursing station if person is unable to self-regulate (each pod lasts for about 4 hours if smoked 5 minutes at a time)



Nicotine gum/ lozenge*

- Resident can not have swallowing or choking risks
- Resident needs to understand the lozenges are to be slowly dissolved between the cheek and gums (not chewed)
- Ideal for residents who are able to self regulate and only take lozenges when needed.

Nicotine patch

- Most effective
- Delivers nicotine through the skin
- Delivers a steady amount of nicotine



NRT DOSING:

<10 CPD
"Light" Smoker



14 mg patch
x 1 - 4 weeks

10 - 29 CPD
"Moderate" Smoker



21 mg patch
x 1 - 4 weeks

30+ CPD
"Heavy" Smoker



28 mg patch
x 1 - 4 weeks*

*Nicotine can be used long term



Choose one short acting NRT (spray or inhaler) for breakthrough cravings as needed