

# Nicotine Patch

Also known as NicoDerm CQ<sup>®</sup> (generics available)

## Why choose the nicotine patch?

- The nicotine patch is used to help you quit smoking by “replacing” the nicotine that you would normally get from a cigarette, but without the harmful chemicals found in cigarette smoke.
- It makes you more comfortable while you are quitting because it reduces the cravings and withdrawal that you feel when you stop smoking.
- It’s easy to use—you apply the patch once a day. Can be used with other nicotine medicines (gum, lozenge, nasal spray, or inhaler)—and studies have shown that this works better than using only the patch when quitting.
- It is inexpensive compared to some of the other medicines for quitting smoking, and is available without a prescription.

## How do I use the nicotine patch?

- Apply the patch to your skin, on an area between your neck and waist or on your upper arm that has little hair.
- Every 24 hours, apply a new patch to a different area of your body—don’t use the same skin site for at least 1 week.

## Dosing schedule:

The patch is available in three strengths: 21 mg, 14 mg, and 7 mg

### If you smoke more than 10 cigarettes a day

**21 mg/day patch**  
1 patch every day  
for 4 to 6 weeks



**14 mg/day patch**  
1 patch every day  
for 2 weeks



**7 mg/day patch**  
1 patch every day  
for 2 weeks

### If you smoke 10 or fewer cigarettes a day

**14 mg/day patch**  
1 patch every day for 6 weeks



**7 mg/day patch**  
1 patch every day for 2 weeks

(continued on back side)



## How long is the treatment?

- It is recommended that you use this medicine for 8 to 10 weeks.

## What are the side effects of the nicotine patch?

- Skin irritation, such as redness, swelling, and itching
  - This is likely caused by the adhesive on the patch. You can apply 1% hydrocortisone cream to the area. If it does not improve within a few days, call your pharmacist.
- Difficulty sleeping or unusual dreams (because you are getting nicotine from the patch while you sleep)
  - Caffeine interacts with tobacco smoke—be sure to reduce your caffeine (coffee, tea, soda) intake by half when you quit smoking, and do not drink anything with caffeine after lunchtime so you are able to sleep well at night.
  - If sleeping is still a problem, talk with your pharmacist. They might recommend that you remove the nicotine patch before bedtime and put on a new one as soon as you wake up.

## What else do I need to know?

- Let your pharmacist know if you are less than 18 years old, pregnant or breastfeeding, had a heart attack within the past 2 weeks, or have irregular heartbeats or angina (chest pain).
- If you have eczema, sensitive skin (i.e., if your skin reacts to band-aids) or other skin conditions, the nicotine patch might not be a good choice for you.
- Be sure to read all of the information on the box of patches—call your pharmacist if you have questions.
- If you plan to use the patch AND another nicotine medicine (gum, lozenge, nasal spray, inhaler), talk with your pharmacist about dosing.

You have a better chance of quitting for good if you also seek counseling. Talk with your pharmacist and/or call your state's tobacco quitline at **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.

