

Kaiser Permanente supports your efforts to quit smoking. Congratulations for taking this important step to a healthier life! This handout will help you decide if a smoking cessation medicine should be part of your quit program.

What are smoking cessation medicines?

Smoking cessation medicines are drugs that help people quit smoking. They can ease the cravings and other symptoms you might feel as your body withdraws from nicotine, the habit-forming drug in cigarettes. Cravings can make it hard to quit. If that's the case for you, a smoking cessation medicine could help. This handout will tell you more about the two types of medicines we most often recommend: nicotine replacement therapy and bupropion SR (Wellbutrin, Zyban).

Will a smoking cessation medicine help me quit smoking?

Studies have shown that these medicines help people quit. They do this by helping with the physical addiction to nicotine. But your body's need for nicotine is only half the story. When you quit smoking, you also need to figure out how to replace smoking with healthier activities. Kaiser Permanente's quit programs can help you with that. Visit kp.org/quitsmoking or contact your local Health Education Center to find out how we can help. Most of these programs are available at no additional charge to you.

Are smoking cessation medicines covered by Kaiser Permanente?

Yes. Kaiser Permanente will cover your treatment at your drug benefit co-pay as long as...

- It is medically needed (prescribed by your doctor or nurse practitioner).
- You have a supplemental drug benefit for approved smoking cessation medicines.
- You take part in a Kaiser Permanente-approved quit smoking program. We offer in person classes and counseling, as well as help online or over the phone.

Call or stop by your local Health Education Center to find out which programs are available.

What if I can't join a smoking cessation program but I still want to use a smoking cessation medicine?

You can buy the nicotine patch, gum, or lozenge over the counter at any drug store. But we strongly encourage you to get as much support as possible to quit and stay smoke-free. Using a program to understand why you smoke and to help you make a plan to quit has been shown to improve your chance of success.

Nicotine replacement therapy

Nicotine replacement therapy provides the body with nicotine to help reduce withdrawal symptoms, so you can focus on other aspects of quitting.

Three types of nicotine replacement are included in Kaiser's drug benefit program: the nicotine patch, lozenge, and gum. These medicines have been proven safe and effective as part of a comprehensive quit-smoking program. To make sure you don't get too much nicotine (overdose), do not smoke while using the patch, lozenge, or gum.

Nicotine replacement therapy might not be right for you if you're pregnant, nursing, have heart disease, or have any other heart problems, such as an irregular or rapid heart beat (arrhythmia) or chest pain (angina). If you're pregnant, nursing, or have any heart problems, please contact your doctor before you use the nicotine patch, lozenge, or gum.

Nicotine patch

The nicotine patch sticks to your skin. It slowly releases nicotine through the skin into your bloodstream throughout the day. Patches are usually put on in the morning and worn for 24 hours or taken off at bedtime (16-hour use). Treatment lasts about 6–8 weeks.

Side effects

- *More common:* rash, itching, or redness of the skin where the patch is applied, difficulty sleeping, headache
- *Less common:* nausea, upset stomach, vivid dreams, nervousness

Nicotine lozenge and gum

The nicotine lozenge and gum provide the body with nicotine at individual points in time. The lozenge and gum should be used on a regular schedule (usually at least 1 piece every

1 to 2 hours). The lozenge should be placed between the gum and cheek and is usually sucked on for 20 to 30 minutes. The gum should be chewed until you experience a “peppery” taste, and then it should be “parked” between the cheek and gum for the nicotine to absorb.

- *Possible side effects of lozenge:* trouble sleeping, heartburn, headache, hiccups, coughing, nausea
- *Possible side effects of gum:* mouth soreness, hiccups, jaw ache, nausea, throat irritation, indigestion

Cost

The nicotine patch, lozenge, and gum are available over-the-counter without a prescription. The patch costs approximately \$112 for a six-week supply, the lozenge costs approximately \$65 for a one-week supply, and the gum costs approximately \$55 for a one-week supply. However, prescriptions for the patch, lozenge, or gum will be covered by your drug plan if you attend one of Kaiser Permanente’s approved quit-smoking programs. Contact your local Health Education Center for information about smoking cessation programs.

Bupropion SR (Wellbutrin, Zyban)

What is bupropion SR? How is it used?

Bupropion SR (Wellbutrin SR or Zyban) is a prescription drug. It can help cut back the urge to smoke as well as lessen your symptoms of withdrawal. Bupropion SR is also used to help people with depression.

But you don’t have to be depressed for it to be useful for quitting smoking. Your doctor will have you start taking bupropion SR while you are still smoking. Your quit date will be set for about a week later. The usual dose is one 150-mg pill each morning for about 8 weeks.

Bupropion SR should not be used by anyone . . .

- With seizure disorders (such as epilepsy)
- With a history of an eating disorder (bulimia or anorexia nervosa)
- Already taking bupropion SR or allergic to bupropion SR
- Currently or recently (in the last 2 weeks) taking a medicine known as a monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitor for depression

If you are pregnant or nursing it is important to tell your health care provider before taking bupropion SR. He or she will talk with you to help you decide if this drug is a good choice for you.

Side effects

- *More common:* difficulty sleeping, dry mouth, dizziness, runny nose
- *Less common:* loss of concentration, nausea, constipation, headache, anxiety (nervousness)
- *Rare:* there is a risk that 1 out of every 1,000 people taking bupropion SR will have a seizure

Stop taking bupropion SR and contact your doctor immediately if you experience agitation, depressed mood, or any changes in behavior that are not typical of nicotine withdrawal, or if you experience suicidal thoughts or behavior.

Cost

You can only get bupropion SR by prescription. The cost of the prescription will be covered at your drug plan co-pay if you attend an approved quit-smoking program. If you get a prescription but choose not to join a program, the cost is about \$70 for an 8-week supply.

How do I get bupropion SR?

A doctor will take your medical history and check your health status before prescribing bupropion SR. You may need to come in for an office visit. You must be enrolled in a Kaiser Permanente-approved quit smoking program to get your medicine covered at your drug benefit co-pay fee.

Additional resources

- Want an online plan to quit smoking tailored especially for you? Check out our “Breathe” Healthy Lifestyles program at kp.org/healthylifestyles.
- Telephone counseling: California Smokers Helpline: 1-800-NO-BUTTS. This is a free service to all California residents. It is one of the approved quit programs.
- *You Can Quit Smoking* self-help materials available at Health Education Centers.
- Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- Visit kp.org/healthyliving for more information.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only.