

Smoking Cessation: Pharmacotherapy Recommendations

Current clinical practice guideline recommends initiation of pharmacotherapy for adults who are tobacco-dependent, whether or not the patient is ready to stop tobacco use. Varenicline is recommended over Bupropion or nicotine patch.¹ For highly tobacco-dependent adults (first cigarette within 5 minutes of waking up), a combination of Varenicline and nicotine patch is recommended. Extended-duration (>12 weeks) may be needed over standard-duration (6 to 12 weeks).

Additional information for providers is available on the [BC Smoking Cessation Program website](#) and below:

Smoking Cessation Prescription Drugs

Generic Name	Brand Name	Dosage Type	Strength	Instruction
Varenicline	Apo-Varenicline ² Teva-Varenicline ²	tablet	0.5 mg and 1 mg	0.5 mg orally a day for 3 days and then twice a day for 4 days. Take with a full glass of water (8 oz) after eating. Take the second dose earlier in the evening after dinner. After 2 weeks: If you are still craving cigarettes and are not experiencing side effects such as nausea, headaches, drowsiness or unusual dreams, increase the dose to 1 mg twice a day.
Bupropion*	Zyban (Bupropion) ³	tablet ER	150 mg	Take 150 mg orally a day for 3 days and then twice a day. Reduce the dose to once a day or stop if you are experiencing agitation, depression, suicidal thoughts, or changes in behaviour.

*To ensure that PharmaNet correctly adjudicates smoking cessation claims for Zyban®, please use the brand name, include the indication, and note “no substitutions” in the written prescription.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy Products

Brand Name	Dosage Type	Strength	Pack Size	Instruction
Nicorette®	gum ⁴	2 mg	105	Take one piece whenever you feel the urge to smoke. Suck like a candy until the taste is gone. Do not chew like a gum.
Nicorette®	gum ⁴	4 mg	105	
Nicorette®	lozenge ⁵	2 mg	88	
Nicorette®	lozenge ⁵	4 mg	88	
Nicoderm® Step 1	patch	21 mg	7	Apply a new patch once a day to a different site on your belly, thigh or shoulder. Do not apply the patch if the skin is red.
Nicoderm® Step 2	patch	14 mg	7	
Nicoderm® Step 3	patch	7 mg	7	

¹ Initiating Pharmacologic Treatment in Tobacco-Dependent Adults. An Official American Thoracic Society Clinical Practice Guideline. Am J Respir Crit Care Med. 2020 Jul 15;202(2):e5-e31. doi: 10.1164/rccm.202005-1982ST.

² PharmaCare fully covers generic versions of varenicline (i.e., Apo-Varenicline, Teva-Varenicline). The brand name Champix® is only covered as a partial benefit

³ PharmaCare covers only the Zyban® brand of bupropion. Wellbutrin®, Wellbutrin XL®, and generic bupropion are not covered as smoking cessation prescription drugs.

⁴ Nicorette® gum flavour: Ultra Fresh Mint only.

⁵ Nicorette® lozenge flavour: Mint only.