

The Carlat Report on Psychiatric Treatment

NICOTINE Patch Fact Sheet

Manufacturer: Various brands (Habitrol, NicoDerm CQ, Nicotrol, generics)

Indications: Available over-the-counter for smoking cessation.

Mechanism: Delivers nicotine transdermally, eliminating any exposure of carcinogens to the lungs.

Efficacy: Quit rates about 20% after one year, or double the rate of placebo.

Dosing:

- Supplied as patches of various tapering strengths including:
 - 21 mg, 14 mg, 7 mg (Habitrol, Nicoderm, others)
 - 15 mg, 10 mg, 5 mg (Nicotrol)
- Dosing guidelines vary, but typical dosing for a one pack-per-day smoker would be 21 mg QD X 4 weeks, then 14 mg QD X 2 weeks, then 7 mg QD X 2 weeks, then quit.
- Lighter smokers (less than one ppd) may be able to start with 14 mg QD X 4-8 weeks followed by 7 mg QD X 2-4 weeks.
- Price varies depending on brand and pharmacy, but a full course will generally cost \$150-\$200.
- Most patches last 24 hours; Habitrol lasts 16 hours and should be removed at bedtime.
- Tips for patients: Press patch firmly for 10 seconds when applying; rotate application spots to prevent skin irritation; don't keep on for more than 24 hours; swimming and showering with them is OK.

Side Effects:

- Common: Skin redness or rash. Symptoms of nicotine intoxication possible (especially if patients smoke while using the patch), including dizziness, nausea, diarrhea.

Pharmacokinetics:

- Continuously released over the recommended dosing interval.

Drug-drug interactions:

- Since nicotine induces the metabolism of clozapine, Zyprexa (olanzapine), and caffeine, quitting smoking may cause a rise in levels of these compounds, necessitating a lower dosage.

Laboratory monitoring:

- None required.

Pearls: NicoDerm CQ (GlaxoSmithKline) is the only clear patch (possibly less embarrassing for patients)...the Habitrol 16 hours patch may be less likely to cause insomnia, but is also likely to lead to more severe craving upon awakening.