*** KICK IT: A Guide to Smoking Cessation in the Workplace***

**Quit Smoking Aids**

*From The Lung Association (September 24, 2012)*

Quit smoking medicines can reduce your nicotine withdrawal symptoms, reduce your urge to smoke, and boost your chances of quitting. Many studies have shown that quit smoking medicines can double or triple a person's chances of quitting. They are meant to be used in combination with behavioural quit smoking methods, like support groups and counselling.

Each smoker is different. It’s important to choose quit smoking methods that are right for you. Talk to your doctor to help you make this choice.

**Quit Smoking Medicines Approved by Health Canada**

**Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)**

Examples: *Nicoderm and Habitrol patches; Nicorette gum, lozenge and inhaler; Thrive gum and lozenge, and store brands (generics)*

**How does it come?** It comes in four forms: the patch, gum, an inhaler, and lozenges. It comes in different strengths (dosages), and several brand names.

**Do I need a prescription?** No. You can buy nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) over the counter at drugstores.

**How does it work?** NRT helps you quit by easing your nicotine withdrawal symptoms. It can reduce symptoms like anger, anxiety, cravings, difficulty concentrating, hunger, impatience and restlessness.

NRT works by giving you some of the nicotine you used to get from cigarettes. It helps you control how much nicotine you are taking. With NRT, you can slowly lower your dose of nicotine as your body adjusts to being smoke-free.

**NRT patches** slowly send nicotine into your bloodstream. Instead of getting hits of nicotine from smoking, your body gets a steady supply of nicotine from the patch.

**NRT gum, inhalers and lozenges** give you a more immediate hit of nicotine. People take these kinds of NRT as needed through the day, when they have a very strong craving for a cigarette.

**How do I use it?** Before using NRT, you talk to a doctor or pharmacist. Tell them about your health conditions, **all** the other medicines you are taking, and how much you usually smoke. They will ask if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Based on this information, the doctor or pharmacist can say if NRT is right for you. If it is, they can help you chose the right dose and explain how to take it.

Ask the pharmacist how to use NRT – there are different directions for the patch, gum, the inhaler and lozenges. Follow the directions carefully.

It's important to choose your dose of nicotine replacement therapy based on the number of cigarettes you usually smoke. For example, a person who usually smokes two packs a day should take a higher dose of NRT than a person who smokes just half a pack a day.

**What do I need to know if I take this medicine?** Nicotine replacement therapy is safe and can be used by most smokers. But some people should not use the nicotine replacement therapy. For complete information on who should not use NRT, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

If you’re using the patch and you notice irregular heartbeat, chest pain, palpitations, leg pain, or severe stomach upset (indigestion, heartburn), remove the patch and see your doctor. If you notice other unwanted side effects, see your doctor or pharmacist.

NRT patches, gum, inhaler cartridges and lozenges contain enough medicine to hurt or kill children and pets. Keep NRT away from kids and pets. When you throw used patches in the garbage, be sure that kids and pets can’t reach them.

If you’ve taken NRT for the maximum time written on the pack, but you still are having cravings and you think you’re at risk of smoking again, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

**Bupropion SR – brand names *Zyban* and *Wellbutrin SR***

**How does it come?** It comes as pills.

**Do I need a prescription?** Yes. You need to talk to a doctor about using this medicine.

**How does it work?** Bupropion (Zyban) is an anti-depressant medicine. It works on the chemicals in your brain. It can help control nicotine cravings. It does not contain nicotine.

**How do I use it?** You start taking bupropion about a week before you stop smoking. Most people take the pills for several weeks.

Some people who take bupropion also take NRT. Ask your doctor about this option, if you are interested.

**What do I need to know if I take this medicine?**

* Take this medicine exactly as directed.
* Go to all follow-up appointments with your doctor. Tell your doctor about any side effects. The doctor may need to adjust your dose.
* Watch for rare side effects- changes in your mood and seizures: In 2004, Health Canada issued an advisory about Zyban. “…a small number of patients taking drugs of this type may feel worse instead of better, particularly within the first few weeks of treatment or when doses are adjusted.”
* If you are taking this medicine and you feel worse or have unusual thoughts, see your doctor right away.

Seizures: Taking Zyban may trigger seizures, especially in people who are at a higher risk for seizures (because of their medical conditions or other medicines they're taking). Your doctor will consider your seizure risk before prescribing Zyban.

If you have a seizure while taking this medicine:

* Call your doctor or go to the emergency department right away,
* Stop taking Zyban, and
* Do not take Zyban (or other medicines that contain bupropion, including Wellbutrin) again.

**Varenicline tartrate – brand name *Champix***

**How does it come?** It comes as pills.

**Do I need a prescription?** Yes. You need to talk to a doctor about using this medicine.

**How does it work?** Varenicline tartrate works in the part of your brain that’s addicted to nicotine. It makes smoking feel less enjoyable. This makes it easier to quit. It does not contain nicotine.

You take the pill as your doctor directed, increasing the dose during the first 2 weeks. You quit smoking between the 8 and 14 th day of treatment.

People usually take the pills for 12 weeks. If after 12 weeks you’ve quit smoking and want help to stay smoke-free, your doctor may prescribe varenicline for another 12 weeks.

**What do I need to know if I take this medicine?**

* Take this medicine exactly as directed.
* Go to all follow-up appointments with your doctor. Tell your doctor about any side effects. The doctor may need to adjust your dose.
* Some people who were taking varencicline (Champix) report rare hypersensitive (allergic) reactions including swelling and serious skin reactions. If you notice any allergic reactions stop taking the medication and see your health care provider.
* Watch out for unusual, serious changes in your mood:

Some people who were taking varencicline (Champix) reported serious symptoms: unusual feelings of agitation, depressed mood, feeling hostile, changes in their behaviour, impulsive or disturbing thoughts, or thinking about hurting themselves or others.

Health Canada issued [an advisory about varenicline tartrate (Champix) in January 2009](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/advisories-avis/_2009/2009_01-eng.php) and [safety information about varenicline tartrate (Champix) in June 2008](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/medeff/advisories-avis/public/_2008/champix_pc-cp-eng.php). Health Canada recommends that:

* Before taking Champix, tell your doctor if you’ve ever had depression or other mental health problems. Your symptoms could get worse while taking this medicine.

When you’re taking Champix:

* If you or your friends notice you have unusual thoughts, feelings or behaviours, especially if you’re feeling depressed, aggressive, or like you want to hurt yourself, stop taking the medicine right away. See your doctor.
* Don’t drive a car or operate hazardous machinery until you know that Champix won't affect your ability to drive properly. Source: <http://www.lung.ca>