

# What Works to Help Smokers Quit?

Quitting smoking is hard, and most smokers need help doing it. There are many treatments that have been proven effective in helping smokers quit their habit. These recommendations are based on the Clinical Practice Guideline *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence*.<sup>i</sup>

## What works to help smokers quit?

Treatment for smoking cessation is not one-size-fits-all. Just like any other medical condition, everyone responds to treatment differently. It is normal for patients to try more than one treatment before finding the right one. For all these reasons, it is important that cessation benefits offered to smokers are **comprehensive**.

Seven medications and three forms of counseling have been proven effective in helping smokers quit. Nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) are available over-the-counter (patch, gum, lozenge) and by prescription (patch, nasal spray, inhaler). Bupropion and varenicline are two other, non-nicotine, prescription-only options. All of these medications should be included under the cessation benefit.

Three types of counseling are recommended as effective for helping smokers quit. Individual (face-to-face), group and phone counseling can be provided a number of ways. Cessation counseling is effective in combination with medications, but also on its own.

Smokers should have access to **ALL** of these treatments.

- Cessation Benefits  
Should Include  
ALL of These:**

  - ✓ NRT Gum
  - ✓ NRT Patch
  - ✓ NRT Lozenge
  - ✓ NRT Inhaler
  - ✓ NRT Nasal Spray
  - ✓ Bupropion
  - ✓ Varenicline
  - ✓ Individual counseling
  - ✓ Group counseling
  - ✓ Phone counseling

- Barriers to Avoid:**

  - ✗ Required Co-payments
  - ✗ Prior Authorization Requirements
  - ✗ Limits on Treatment Duration
  - ✗ Yearly or Lifetime Limits
  - ✗ Dollar Limits
  - ✗ “Stepped Care” Therapy
  - ✗ Counseling Required for Medications

## What DOESN'T help smokers quit?

Some healthcare plans that offer cessation benefits erect barriers that discourage smokers from using the benefits or limit their use. Any policy or process that makes it harder for smokers to get treatment and/or to try different treatments should be avoided.

## Who should have comprehensive cessation benefits?

All smokers should have access to comprehensive cessation benefits. One of the ways to provide access is through a smoker’s health insurance plan. This is why the American Lung Association urges all insurance plans – including Medicare, Medicaid, and employer-provided plans – to cover a comprehensive benefit for all plan members.

Federal, state and local governments can also provide these treatments to smokers regardless of insurance status through health departments or other campaigns. The federal and state governments already provide phone counseling in the U.S. through the 1-800-QUIT-NOW network of state quitlines (some quitlines also provide free or discounted medications). Many state and local governments also provide cessation programs through local health departments or community health centers.

<sup>i</sup> Updated May 2008. Available at: <http://surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco/>