



Australian Government
Department of Health and Aged Care

Eligibility for Nicotine Replacement Therapies – Advice for health professionals

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Are patients eligible for subsidised NRTs for vaping cessation under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)?

Summary

The PBS restriction for NRT aims to provide an affordable intervention to support nicotine cessation. Where clinically appropriate, a patient may be eligible for PBS subsidised NRTs provided they are nicotine dependent from the inhalation of any nicotine containing product.

Additional information

A range of NRTs have been approved for sale by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for smoking cessation following a rigorous assessment for quality, safety and efficacy. These products are available for people aged 12 years and over and are sold in a wide range of retail outlets, including supermarkets and pharmacies.

NRTs are considered to be safe for most users, and pose less health risks compared to e-cigarettes or tobacco products. NRTs are also generally less addictive than e-cigarettes and tobacco products.

Evidence supporting the use of NRTs specifically for vaping cessation is limited, and no form of NRT has been evaluated by the TGA specifically for vaping cessation. However, NRTs are being used by some clinicians for this purpose. This practice is known as [‘off label’](#) prescribing and is consistent with [draft interim guidance](#) on smoking and vaping cessation published by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

Like tobacco products, e-cigarettes are generally used with nicotine, and discontinuation of the use of either product may lead to symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. Concurrent or ‘dual’ use of e-cigarettes and tobacco products is very common, and many patients may seek support to quit smoking and vaping, and/or for related reasons that involve symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.

There is evidence that e-cigarette use is a strong predictor of future tobacco smoking, particularly among young people. Former smokers using e-cigarettes may also be more likely to relapse compared to former tobacco smokers who don’t use e-cigarettes.

In some Australian jurisdictions e-cigarettes are defined as ‘smoking products’. Current restrictions for [PBS-listed medicines for smoking cessation](#) refer to ‘smoking’ without reference to the form or method of smoking.