



# Tobacco Independence:

Freedom from a deadly addiction

## NRT Guidelines

The following information can be used as a guide to patch Nicotine Replacement Therapy. In addition to taking a patient history, an easy screen for the degree of nicotine dependence that is present in an individual is the Fagerstrom Test. It is comprised of six questions and answers are given points. The higher the point total, the greater the dependency.

### Fagerstrom Test for Nicotine Dependence

1. How soon after you wake up do you smoke your first cigarette?  
Within 5 min (3) 5 - 30 min (2) 31 - 60 min (1) after 60 min (0)
2. Do you find it hard not to smoke in places that you shouldn't smoke, such as in church, in school, in a movie, on the bus, or in a hospital?  
Yes (1) No (0)
3. Which cigarette would you hate most to have to give up?  
The first one in the morning (1) Any other one (0)
4. How many cigarettes do you smoke each day?  
10 - fewer (0) 11-20 (1) 21-30 (2) 31 or more (3)
5. Do you smoke more in the first few hours after waking up than you do during the rest of the day?  
Yes (1) No (0)
6. Do you still smoke, even if you are so sick that you are in bed most of the day or if you have a severe cough?  
Yes (1) No (0)

### Fagerstrom Score to guide patch therapy:

- 7 - 10 points: start patient with a 21 mg patch
- 4 - 6 points: start patient with a 14 mg patch
- Less than 4 points: start patient with a 7 mg patch

Nicotine Patch Therapy can also be guided by the amount of cigarettes smoked in a day.

Based on Baseline Cigarettes per Day (CPD)

|           |            |
|-----------|------------|
| <10 CPD   | 7-14 mg/d  |
| 10-20 CPD | 14-21 mg/d |
| 21-40 CPD | 22-42 mg/d |
| >40 CPD   | 42+ mg/d   |

### Other considerations:

Patch therapy can be tapered down over 12 weeks (or longer in some individuals) by dropping to the next lowest dose used per day. Usually a patient needs three to four weeks of their highest dose to stabilize before tapering starts. The use of the nicotine gum or lozenge is very helpful in treating cravings. They are frequently used as PRN (as needed) medications to treat the patient who has a patch on, but has heightened, episodic cravings. These formulations of nicotine can be used throughout the day with a maximum of approximately 20 pieces of gum or lozenge per a 24 hours period. The high dose use of these can point out to the health provider that a higher dose patch may be indicated. (For example, if a patient is wearing a 21mg patch and requires 10 pieces of gum to refrain from smoking, adding a 7mg patch to the dose regimen may be indicated).

*\*The recommendations are suggestions and should be used in conjunction with the advice of a health care provider. They do not take into consideration individual health issues and concerns, therefore a thorough health history and consideration of all individual medical, psychological, and social issues should be considered when deciding how best to use NRT.*

New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services

1450 Western Avenue • Albany, NY 12203 • 518.485.1768 • f. 518.485.6014 • [www.oasas.state.ny.us](http://www.oasas.state.ny.us)

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo • Commissioner Arlene González-Sánchez, M.S., L.M.S.W.