



Pharmaceutical Services Division, B.C. Ministry of Health

B.C. Smoking Cessation Program

The B.C. Smoking Cessation Program offers British Columbians nicotine replacement therapy products (nicotine gum and patches) at no cost and smoking cessation prescription drugs as benefits under PharmaCare. This program is open to B.C. residents who smoke or use other tobacco products and wish to quit.

What does the program cover?

The program covers two types of smoking cessation aids:

- two prescription smoking cessation drugs, bupropion (brand name Zyban®) and varenicline (brand name Champix®)
- eligible non-prescription (over-the-counter) nicotine replacement therapy chewing gum or patches

B.C. residents can get up to 12 continuous weeks (84 continuous days) of coverage for either one NRT product or one prescription drug once every calendar year (January 1 through December 31).

Who can take part?

Nicotine replacement therapy coverage is available to any B.C. resident who

- smokes or uses another tobacco product (e.g., takes snuff, chews tobacco)
- has active Medical Services Plan coverage

Prescription drug coverage is available to any B.C. resident who

- smokes or uses another tobacco product (e.g., takes snuff, chews tobacco)
- has active Medical Services Plan coverage
- is covered by an eligible PharmaCare plan

Who cannot take part?

- Non-residents of B.C.
- People who are covered under a federal government drug plan (e.g., Armed Forces, RCMP, etc.)

What are smoking cessation prescription drugs?

Bupropion (Zyban®) and varenicline (Champix®) do not contain nicotine but work on the brain to manage withdrawal symptoms and cravings and can reduce the urge to smoke. When you are already seeing your doctor for another medical reason, ask about a prescription for one of these drugs. Your doctor can help you decide which drug is best for you.

What are nicotine replacement therapy products?

Nicotine replacement therapy products are non-prescription medications which contain nicotine. They work to

reduce withdrawal symptoms when you quit smoking by giving you the nicotine you would get through smoking. Nicotine replacement therapy products help you reduce the amount of nicotine gradually and handle withdrawal symptoms more easily.

How do I get my smoking cessation products?

You must take your doctor’s prescription for bupropion or varenicline to a community pharmacy to have it filled. You can either have your nicotine gum or patches mailed to you or you can pick them up at a community pharmacy (you will need to give the pharmacist the HealthLink BC reference number that you received during registration).

Getting Started...

What you want...

What you do...

I want to use a prescription drug to help me quit smoking...	→	See your doctor to discuss your options.
I want a nicotine patch or gum...	→	Call HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 to register.
I want to quit, but I don’t know what to do...	→	Speak to your doctor or pharmacist, call HealthLink BC and QuitNow Services at 8-1-1 or visit www.quitnow.ca for free, 24-hour counselling to help British Columbians who want to quit smoking.
I want to find out more about the Smoking Cessation program...	→	Call HealthLink BC 8-1-1 for information or visit www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare/stop-smoking/
I want to register for Fair PharmaCare or learn more about PharmaCare...	→	Visit www.health.gov.bc.ca/pharmacare or call Health Insurance BC (HIBC) at: 604-683-7151 (from Vancouver) or 1-800-663-7100 (from the rest of BC).

How much will it cost?

What you want

What you get

What it costs

Prescription drugs (bupropion [Zyban®] or varenicline [Champix®])	Coverage for a single continuous course of treatment lasting up to 12 weeks (84 days) in a row once every calendar year	Covered under the PharmaCare program. Actual cost depends on the rules of your PharmaCare plan which may pay for all, part or none of the cost.
Nicotine replacement therapy products (gum or patch)	Coverage for a single continuous course of treatment lasting up to 12 weeks (84 days) in a row once every calendar year	No charge

What is PharmaCare?

PharmaCare is a B.C. Ministry of Health program that helps British Columbians with the cost of eligible prescription drugs and designated medical supplies.