



July 23, 2025

Dear Colleague,

As clinicians, we know people who utilize mental health services use tobacco at much higher rates than others, and public health campaigns aimed at reducing tobacco use have not been as successful with the individuals we serve. These remarkably high smoking rates greatly contribute to the well-documented premature mortality and significantly increased chronic disease burden among individuals with serious mental illnesses.

Fortunately, we know there is much we can do to assist. Although tobacco use treatment has traditionally been framed as only appropriate for those who are ready to quit, tobacco use treatment medications can help all patients avoid uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms, whether they want to quit, reduce their use or avoid smoking in specific situations (such as at home, at work or in public spaces).

Some New Yorkers may not be ready or interested in quitting but may care about protecting those around them, saving money or participating in activities that are meaningful to them. As a doctor or nurse practitioner, you can support all your patients who smoke or vape with tobacco use treatment, including medications like nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), varenicline, or bupropion to help them reach their goals.

The New York State (NYS) Medicaid NYRx formulary includes all forms of NRT and varenicline without a prior authorization requirement. There are no limits in treatment length or maximum number of trials. For individuals using commercial insurance, the NYS Department of Financial Services¹ has issued directives that medication treatment of tobacco use disorder be covered by all insurers that are regulated by the state.

The US Preventive Services Taskforce indicates that using a combination of NRT products (in particular, combining short-acting plus long-acting forms of NRT) has been found to be more effective than using a single form of NRT². The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene created a prescribing guide for these treatments: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/csi/tobacco-med-brief-instructions.pdf>

Overall, NYS has had great success in reducing smoking rates over the past two decades. However, there is still work to be done, especially for individuals with serious mental illness. Supporting all your patients who use tobacco treatment, is one of the most important interventions you can provide.

Ann Marie T. Sullivan, MD
Commissioner
NYS Office of Mental Health

Michelle Morse, MD, MPH
Acting Health Commissioner and Chief Medical Officer
NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

¹ NYS Department of Financial Services. Insurance Circular Letter No. 12 (2019). December 11, 2019.

² US Preventive Services Task Force; Krist AH, Davidson KW, Mangione CM, Barry MJ, Cabana M, Caughey AB, Donahue K, Doubeni CA, Epling JW Jr, Kubik M, Ogedegbe G, Pbert L, Silverstein M, Simon MA, Tseng CW, Wong JB. Interventions for Tobacco Smoking Cessation in Adults, Including Pregnant Persons: US Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement. JAMA. 2021 Jan 19;325(3):265-279. doi: 10.1001/jama.2020.25019. PMID: 33464343.



To My Doctor or Nurse Practitioner:

On _____ (date) I attended a presentation on Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT).

I learned about the different types of NRT and how they could help reduce the cravings and discomfort of nicotine withdrawal. I also learned that it is safe for me to get two types of NRT at the same time (see other side). Even if I am not ready to quit smoking/vaping, I can use NRT to help me manage nicotine withdrawal symptoms if I am in a place where I cannot smoke or vape. That's really important for my recovery!

_____ I'm ready to quit or cut back my smoking/vaping! Please talk to me about all the different types of medication that can help me to stop or cut back. I'm also interested in the NRT products I checked below.

_____ I'm not ready to quit or cut back smoking/vaping right now but I'd like to try NRT to better manage nicotine withdrawal. I am especially interested in these NRT products (check all that you'd like to discuss with your doctor or nurse practitioner):

_____ (Long Acting) Patch

_____ Lozenge

_____ Nasal Spray

_____ Gum

Thank you for helping me with my tobacco use!

Name: _____

Signature: _____