

Even After
a Cancer
Diagnosis

It's Never Too Late To Assist Patients to Stop Tobacco Use



Pharmacotherapy Considerations for Cancer Patients

Pharmacological treatment is recommended for all patients as a component of tobacco cessation treatment. When using any of these products, any considerations or contraindications related to the diagnosis must be recognized and acknowledged in the treatment plan.

Considerations for Oncology

NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY

- Oral products, including gum, lozenge, spray and inhaler may be irritating to the oral mucosa; therefore, they may not be appropriate for use for individuals:
 - with oral cancer
 - with head and neck cancer who are undergoing radiation
 - who receive chemotherapy with a high incidence of stomatitis
- Some forms of NRT may be contraindicated in the immediate pre and/or post-operative period in patients who undergo tissue reconstruction where revascularization is a concern. These cases should be discussed on an individual basis with the surgeon and healthcare team. In such cases, non-nicotine treatments for smoking cessation are alternate options (e.g. varenicline, bupropion).

BUPROPION

- For cancer patients with depression symptoms, bupropion increases abstinence rates, lowers withdrawal and increases quality of life.
- Bupropion is contraindicated for patients with CNS tumor or any patient at increased risk of seizure.

VARENICLINE

- No reported studies of interactions between varenicline and commonly used lung cancer therapies.
 - Varenicline should be used cautiously in patients with a history of seizures or conditions that lower seizure threshold.
 - Nausea is the most common side effect, similar to rates reported with the general population.
 - Dosage and appropriateness of use may need to be considered for cancer patients who are experiencing nausea as a side effect of cancer treatments.
 - Standard product warnings include close monitoring for neuropsychiatric symptoms and consideration of use of nicotine replacement therapy as a treatment option.
 - Varenicline is tolerated in cancer patients, but given the psychological and medical vulnerability of this population it may be preferable to use along with intensive behavioural counselling.
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- In the general population, this option reduces the appetite increase and weight gain that is associated with smoking cessation. This may negatively impact cancer patients who may be struggling with nutrition and weight loss related to their treatments.
 - There is evidence that bupropion may have a large effect on the metabolism of tamoxifen by inhibiting conversion to active metabolites and decreasing effectiveness.