

For health professionals

GP Insight
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Together we will beat cancer



Effective smoking cessation interventions

New poster to display
in your surgery



Your advice could trigger a successful quit attempt



The UK Government has recently announced its ambition that England will become a smoke-free country by 2030 and the Scottish government is working towards a tobacco-free generation by 2034. Your support in providing evidence-based interventions to help smokers quit is essential to achieving this.

NICE (NG92) recommends that at every opportunity, health professionals should ask people if they smoke and advise them to stop smoking in a way that best suits their preferences¹.

Visit nice.org.uk/ng92 Scottish guidelines at po.st/HealthScotland

- NICE. Clinical guideline 92. 2018.
- Sonia Simkins. Implementing improvements in smoking cessation at a practice level. 2016.
- NCSCT. Effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of programmes to help smokers to stop and prevent smoking uptake at local level. 2015
- Hartmann-Boyce J et al. Electronic cigarettes for smoking cessation. 2016.
- Liu, X. et al. Efficiency and adverse events of electronic cigarettes. 2018.
- Beard E. et al. Association between electronic cigarette use...and use of stop smoking services in England. 2016
- Statistics on NHS Stop Smoking Services. 2017.
- Brown, J. et al. Real-world effectiveness of e-cigarettes when used to aid smoking cessation. 2014.
- Hajek P et al. A randomised trial of e-cigarettes versus nicotine-replacement therapy. 2019.
- Burstyn I. Peering through the mist. 2014.
- Shahab I et al. Nicotine, Carcinogen, and Toxin Exposure in Long-Term E-Cigarette and Nicotine Replacement Therapy Users. 2017.
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- Williams M et al. Metal and Silicate Particles Including Nanoparticles Are Present in Electronic Cigarette Cartomizer Fluid and Aerosol. 2013.
- Goniewicz et al. Levels of selected carcinogens and toxicants in vapour from electronic cigarettes. 2013.
- Rosenberg G. et al. Smoking Cessation in Primary Care. 2019.

Practical case studies

Role of e-cigarettes within smoking cessation



Dr Ben Noble, a GP Partner from Loughborough, has been discussing e-cigarettes as part of VBA, particularly with working class men. He has

focused on the financial benefits of using e-cigarettes which offer smokers a lower cost quit aide to break their habit. And other advantages such as maintaining their “smoke breaks”, whilst encouraging others to quit.

“This is a demographic who I find won’t make time for formal smoking cessation clinics and who generally don’t like using NRT. Many of them would have tried e-cigarettes before were it not for the perception that they are just as, if not more, unhealthy than cigarettes. Hence, my VBA has seemed to hit home quite encouragingly.”

Smoking cessation at Practice level

Hawes Lane surgery in the West Midlands implemented a stop smoking service whereby a weekly clinic was held with a stop smoking advisor. Letters were sent to registered smokers explaining the service and those who wanted to quit were referred with an appointment within five days. Within a six-month period, there was a 27% decrease in the number of registered patients who smoked, and a 34% reduction in unplanned hospital admissions by smokers. Clinics have now been set up in 65 practices within the locality².

Find out more at cruk.org/smokingcessation.

Effective cessation interventions

There are a number of interventions to help people stop smoking. Different cessation tools, including prescribed medication, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and e-cigarettes, will work better for different individuals, but we know that quit attempts are more likely to be successful with behavioural support.

Stop Smoking Services



Where they are available, Stop Smoking Services should be considered as the first-choice route for a smoker as they are over three times as likely to quit compared to going cold turkey. Unfortunately in some areas, these services are no longer provided which makes your support even more valuable. You can direct your patients to www.nhs.uk/smokefree for a personalised quitting plan and further advice.

Evidence?

Evidence shows that Stop Smoking Services are the most effective way to quit and are one of the most cost-effective interventions in the NHS³.

Offering advice and Prescription medication



To help people quit, NICE recommend offering advice on nicotine-containing products on general sale to smokers and prescribing medication such as varenicline or bupropion.

Evidence?

NRT when prescribed by a healthcare professional can significantly reduce withdrawal symptoms and cravings and prescription medications are also shown to improve the success of quit attempts. When bought over the counter, NRT does not appear to be any more effective at helping smokers quit compared to going cold turkey, which might be due to people not consuming enough nicotine to satisfy their cravings.

E-cigarettes



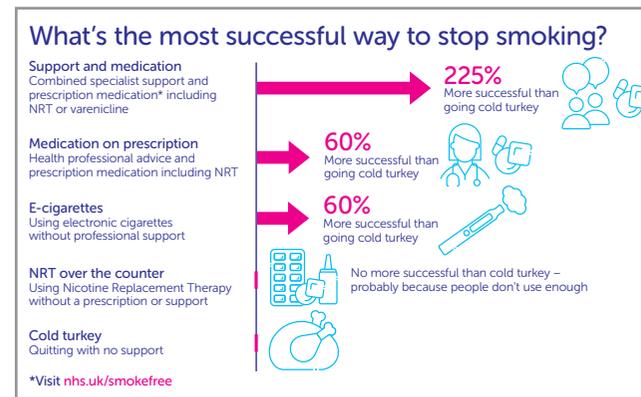
There is ever-growing evidence that e-cigarettes are an effective cessation tool^{4,5,6,7,8,9}. But we don’t yet know all the long-term effects. The RCGP and NICE recommend that e-cigarettes should be discussed as an option for smoking cessation (po.st/RCGP).

Patients using e-cigarettes should be advised that they need to switch completely rather than becoming ‘dual users’ – using e-cigarettes and smoking. For people using an e-cigarette who want to use other nicotine-containing products at the same time, it is safe to do so.

Evidence?

Research so far shows that e-cigarettes are far less harmful than smoking^{10,11} and can be an appropriate quitting aid for some people who smoke, including those who have tried and failed to quit previously using other methods. A recent study showed that those using e-cigarettes were 95% more likely to quit than those not using e-cigarettes¹².

Since e-cigarettes are a new technology, the long-term health implications of using these products are unclear. Some toxic chemicals (such as NNALs, acetaldehydes and formaldehyde) have been found in some products, but the evidence suggests their safety profile is far more comparable to that of other NRT products than tobacco.^{13,14}



Having a conversation can be very powerful

Offer Very Brief Advice (VBA)

Time can be a barrier for any behaviour change conversation, especially when encouraging smokers to stop, but you could trigger a quit attempt in 30 seconds using VBA. VBA is an evidence-based intervention that can be delivered by any health professional aimed at raising awareness of unhealthy behaviours and encouraging behaviour change.

NICE recommend that all frontline health professionals should be trained to offer VBA. Despite this only half of primary care practitioners frequently complete it¹⁵.

VBA is easy to deliver. It can be:

- used opportunistically in almost any consultation without pressing or challenging a patient
- delivered across many consultations to reinforce the message of how to quit

- delivered without knowledge of the patient's smoking habits

There is no need to go into detail about what or how much they smoke as these questions can be discussed at a specific smoking cessation appointment.

Complete 'The Essentials of Smoking Cessation' CPD e-learning (30mins) at cruk.org/smokingcessation

The 'AAA' framework, outlined below, is a useful way to deliver VBA and prompt a quit attempt:



Ask: to establish/check and record smoking status (including ex-smokers)

'Do you smoke?'

'I see from my notes you've stopped smoking, how's that going?'

Coding e-cigarette users

If a patient uses an e-cigarette but doesn't smoke tobacco at all, then code as a non-smoker. If a patient uses an e-cigarette but also smokes tobacco, then code as a smoker.



Advise: the patient on the most effective way to stop smoking

'Did you know specialist support makes you more likely to succeed in stopping smoking? You can experiment with different quitting aids to find what's right for you.'

You could inform the patient about the support that a local Stop Smoking Service can provide, and explain that safe and effective stop smoking medications such as varenicline and bupropion are available on prescription.

If it's relevant, explain that the Stop Smoking Service will support the use of e-cigarettes as a quitting aid if the person wants to use them.



Act: If a smoker is interested; signpost to locally available support or service

'I can refer you to the free local Stop Smoking Service, who will arrange treatment and support you while you quit.'

If there isn't a local Stop Smoking Service available or the patient doesn't want to attend, have a conversation about alternatives including asking them to come back for a dedicated consultation about medication, or if they're interested, discuss e-cigarettes.

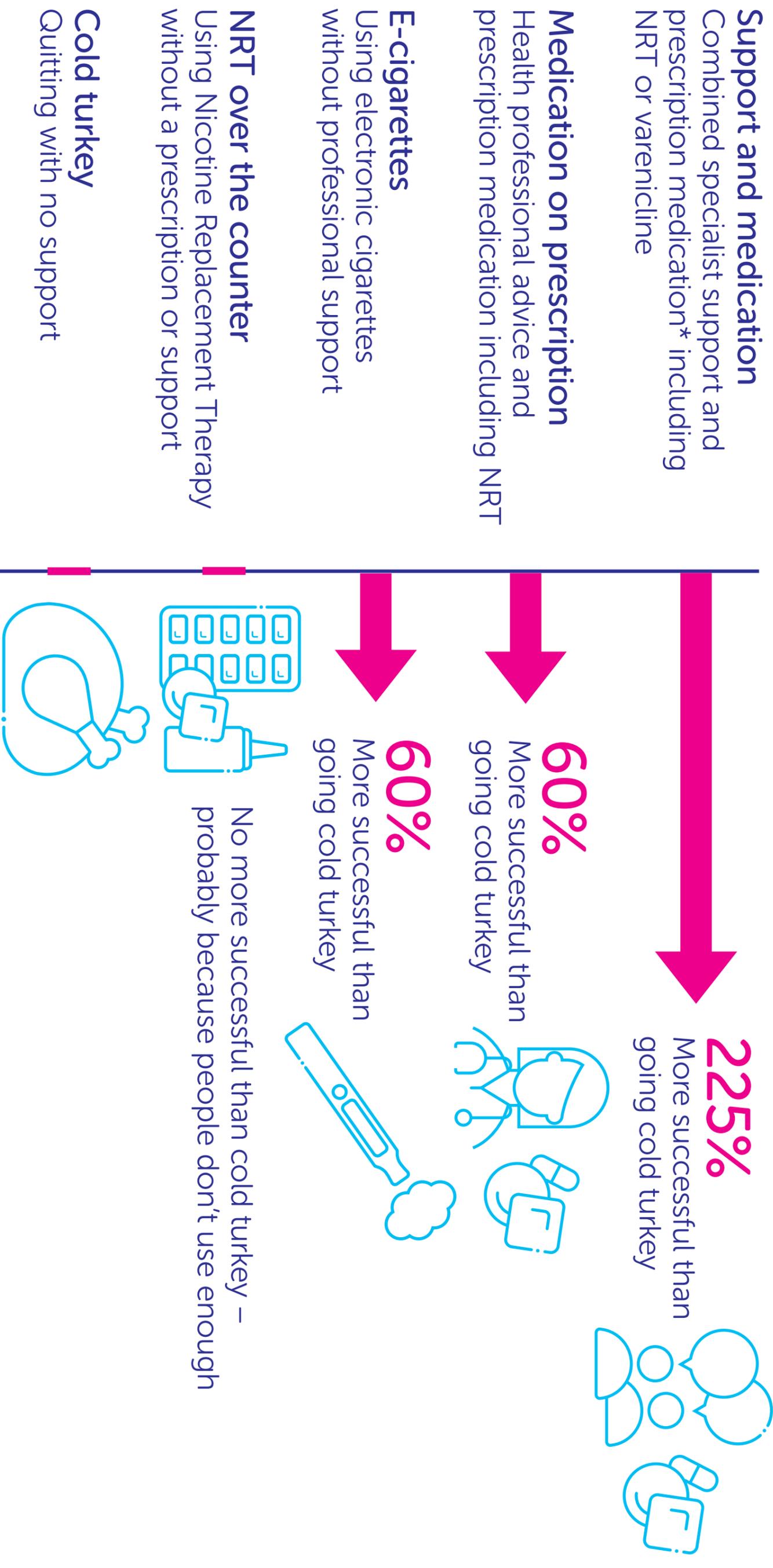
If they're not interested in stopping, then try to encourage future attempts.

As per NICE guidance, record the fact that they smoke and at every opportunity ask them about it again in a way that is sensitive to their preference and needs.



Sign up to receive Cancer Insight by email.
cruk.org/cancerinsightGP

What's the most successful way to stop smoking?



*Visit [nhs.uk/smokefree](https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree)

Source: Kotz, D, Brown, J, West, R. 2014 'Real-world' effectiveness of smoking cessation treatments: a population study. *Addiction*. 109(3):491-9. doi: 10.1111/add.12429; Brown J, Beard E, Kotz D, Michie S, West R. 2014. Real-world effectiveness of e-cigarettes when used to aid smoking cessation: a cross-sectional population study. *Addiction*. 109(9): 1531–1540

[cruk.org](https://www.cruk.org)

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