

PHARMACISTS:

Furnishing Nicotine Replacement Therapy for Smoking Cessation



California law (Senate Bill 493, effective 1/25/2016) allows pharmacists to provide nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products without a physician's prescription.¹ This regulation was passed to ensure that patients in California have timely access to NRT and information to initiate smoking cessation medication therapy appropriately.

Q: What NRT products are covered under this furnishing authority?

A: Prescription NRT (inhaler, nasal spray) approved by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are covered under this protocol.

Q: What does this mean for non-prescription or “over-the-counter” (OTC) NRT products?

A: Some patients need a prescription to get OTC NRT (patches, gum, and lozenges) covered by their insurance. This protocol allows pharmacists to prescribe OTC NRT just as physicians do. Patients then pay the co-pay (where applicable) for the product.



Q: What are the steps to furnish NRT?

A: Pharmacists must follow the California Board of Pharmacy Protocol for Pharmacists Furnishing Nicotine Replacement Products as indicated here:²

1. Review the patient's current tobacco use and past quit attempts.
2. Ask the patient the six screening questions to determine if NRT is right for him/her.
3. If NRT is appropriate, in consultation with the patient select any nicotine replacement product (alone or in combination) from a list of products specified in the NRT furnishing protocol.
4. Once NRT is furnished:
 - a. Review instructions for proper use with the patient.
 - b. Recommend that the patient seek additional assistance and support from services like the California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS).
5. Answer any questions the patient has regarding smoking cessation therapy and NRT.

Q: Who should pharmacists notify?

A: Pharmacists should notify the patient's primary care provider after furnishing NRT. If the patient does not have a primary care provider, the pharmacist should:

1. Give the patient a written record of the NRT product furnished.
2. Advise the patient to consult with a health care provider of the patient's choice.

Q: What should pharmacists document?

A: Pharmacists should document any NRT furnished in the patient's medication record. Records should be securely stored for at least three years from the date of dispense.

Q: Do pharmacists need training prior to furnishing prescription NRT?

A: Yes, pharmacists must complete a minimum of 2 hours (every 2 years) from an approved continuing education program specific to smoking cessation therapy and NRT.

For example qualifying programs see:

- California Pharmacists Association: <https://www.cpha.com/CE-Events/OnDemand/Smoking-Cessation>
- UC Quits: <https://cmecalifornia.com/Activity/3439569/Detail.aspx> (Modules 1-4)

¹California State Board of Pharmacy (2016). SB-493 Pharmacy practice, SEC. 6, Section 4052 of the Business and Professions Code. Retrieved on 1/18/17 from http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB493

²California State Board of Pharmacy (2016). Section 1746.2 CA Code of Regulations. Protocol for Pharmacists Furnishing Nicotine Replacement Products. Retrieved on 1/18/17 from http://www.pharmacy.ca.gov/publications/nicotine_protocol.pdf

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