

Pharmacy Guidance:

Age Requirements for FDA-Approved Smoking Cessation Medications

General Information

Smoking cessation medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) can be important tools for patients who smoke and want to quit. Using these medications can double their chances of success. There are over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription options. It is important to know who can purchase OTC products.

What are the FDA-approved OTC and prescription smoking cessation medications?

There are three FDA-approved OTC nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) medications:

- Nicotine patches, nicotine gum and nicotine lozenges

These FDA-approved smoking cessation medications are only available by prescription:

- Two NRT medications: nasal spray and inhaler
- Two non-nicotine medications: bupropion SR (Zyban or Wellbutrin) and varenicline (Chantix)

What about electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes)?

Electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes) are not FDA-approved smoking cessation devices. These products are subject to applicable New York City (NYC) laws. Effective Jan. 1, 2019, e-cigarettes and tobacco products can no longer be sold in pharmacies.

Are smoking cessation medications subject to local NYC tobacco laws?

No. Any product that has been approved by the FDA for use as a smoking cessation medication is not considered a tobacco product. Local laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco products to those under the age of 21 do not apply.

Who can purchase OTC smoking cessation medications?

- OTC smoking cessation medications are FDA-approved for use by adults 18 years and older.
- If someone younger than 18 is interested in quitting, advise them to talk to a health care professional about medication options and obtaining a prescription.

For more information about NYC tobacco laws, visit nyc.gov/health and search for “tobacco laws.”