

Nicotine gum warnings scaring away smokers

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Some public-health experts are urging U.S. food and drug officials to tone down the warning labels on nicotine medicines.

They say nicotine gums, patches and lozenges products carry so many warnings that smokers are reluctant to use them, The Wall Street Journal reported.

The newspaper said public-health experts may recommend relaxing health warnings for pregnant women and eliminating the requirement that teenagers get the approval of a physician for over-the-counter nicotine medicines.

"A 17-year-old smoker of 25 cigarettes per day is doing the right thing to use nicotine gum," says Jonathan Foulds, a tobacco researcher at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. "Why give him another hurdle to cross to get help?"

Critics urge caution in making any changes to current labeling.

"The use of nicotine, whose efficacy in treating nicotine addiction is controversial even in adults, must be strictly avoided in pregnancy, breastfeeding, childhood and adolescence," eight researchers and anti-smoking advocates said in an editorial in the current Journal of Health Psychology.

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