



Department of Health
140 County Highway 33W
Suite 3
Cooperstown, NY 13326
Phone: (607) 547-6483
Fax: (607) 547-4385

NEWS RELEASES

Smokers' Quitline

Smokers cannot be labeled. About one out of five New York adults is a smoker. Smokers are both male and female, young and old, and are of all levels of education and income. What almost all smokers have in common is that lately they have been thinking about the costs in health, money and inconvenience of smoking, the advantages of quitting and how to break their addiction.

New Yorkers who are ready to quit smoking don't have to do it alone thanks to the toll-free New York State Smokers' Quitline at 1-866-NY QUITTS (1-866-697-8487). The Quitline is staffed by specialists who provide free cessation coaching and quit plans, free Nicotine Replacement Therapy starter kits (nicotine patches and gum) for those who qualify, and information about local stop smoking clinics. Information about the starter kits, and other assistance, is also available on the Quitline web site at www.nysmokefree.com.

There are many reasons for any smoker to think about the health risks to themselves and those around them, the rising costs in money, and the inconvenience of finding havens in which to smoke. Smoking was once advertised as sophisticated. But the most easily recognized image of a smoker today is someone puffing while standing outside in every kind of weather as more places become off-limits to smoking.

The rising cost of a pack of cigarettes means that most smokers and their families are forced to make other sacrifices to continue a life-threatening addiction. The price of a pack is only a portion of the monetary cost a smoker pays over a lifetime. For example, smokers and those exposed to secondhand smoke are sick more often than non-smokers. It is also estimated that smokers pay twice as much for life insurance as non-smokers.

"Of course, money and inconvenience are only the beginning of the true cost of smoking. More deaths are caused each year by tobacco use than by all deaths from AIDS, illegal drug use, alcohol use, motor vehicle injuries, suicides and murders combined," said Sue Smith, Deputy Director of the Otsego County Department of Health.

"Tobacco smoke contains at least 4,000 chemicals, including ammonia, cyanide, arsenic and formaldehyde. Of them, more than 50 are known carcinogens. Tobacco products are the only legal consumer products that are lethal when used exactly as the manufacturer intends," she said.

"Non-smokers also pay a toll for their exposure to the poisons of secondhand smoke. It is estimated that in New York State about 2,500 non-smokers die each year due to diseases related to secondhand smoke, including cardiovascular disease and lung cancer.

“A pregnant woman who is exposed to secondhand smoke has a greater chance of having a more difficult delivery, having a smaller than average baby, and having a sick baby.

“It is no wonder that more than half of all New York smokers try to quit smoking each year. More of them than ever are turning to the New York State Smokers’ Quitline for the tools to help them beat their addiction,” Sue Smith said.

Medicaid will pay for most stop smoking prescription medications for those who qualify. Smokers should also check with their insurance carriers to see if stop smoking medications are covered.

To learn more about the advantages of quitting smoking and how to do it, call the Otsego County Department of Health at (607) 547-4230.

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