

Quitline Tips

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DENVER — Smokers trying to kick the habit have been flooding our quitlines as a federally mandated tobacco tax takes effect. National Jewish Health operates quitlines for six states -- Colorado, Ohio, Iowa, New Mexico, Montana and Idaho -- and several health plans. Calls peaked on April 1, the day the 62-cent-per-pack tax took effect, at about 3,200 calls per day, more than four times the expected volume for this time of year. They have remained high throughout April. Colorado Quitline Coach Douglas Olivas offers the following tips to those looking to quit.

Stress Management. The number one reason people seem to relapse is out of stress. Exercise, adequate sleep, and proper nutrition are the basics, but there are many ways to relax. Some ways include hot showers, music, deep breathing exercises, and Progressive Muscle Relaxation Technique (PMR) where you tense and relax your muscles. Meditation, hobbies, massages, etc. are excellent ways to distress as well.

Oral substitutes. Smoking is a very orally fixated habit. One tip many have not heard of is the "Straw Method." Find a straw that has the width of a cigarette, cut the straw down to the size of a cigarette, with cotton stuff the straw; this acts as a filter. Puff on that instead. A menthol smoker may first soak the cotton in mint mouth wash, and let it dry before stuffing the straw. Other oral substitutes are cinnamon sticks, gum, hard candies, vegetable sticks, fruits, nuts, toothpicks, water.

Prepare yourself. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (patches, gum, etc.) helps take the edge off cravings. Remember to take it slow, and make behavioral changes like, stopping smoking in the car, the home, and take different types of breaks while at work. Cut back, and practice fighting your cravings before quitting. Cravings generally last 8-10 minutes and then pass.

Determination. It's been said that, "Success is 99% failure..." and that goes hand in hand with quitting smoking. The Quit Line will never give up helping you try to quit smoking, and you shouldn't either!

Set a meaningful Quit Date. Tobacco dependence is stronger than heroine or cocaine. Getting quit is the first step. If possible set a meaningful quit date around an anniversary, holiday, or birthday. Celebrate being smoke free one day at a time, one-month, three-months, six-months, one-year, etc. Do something special on your smoke free anniversary date.

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Media Contacts

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