

Don't resolve to quit smoking; plan to

Written by Holyoke Enterprise

Instead of quitting smoking cold turkey on Jan. 1, one should put together a plan to quit, experts recommend. Research shows setting a “quit date” as part of a plan to quit smoking that is shared with family and friends leads to a better success rate with the perennially popular New Year’s resolution.

“People who want to quit using tobacco don’t have to go it alone,” said Deb Osborne, cessation director for the State Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership. “They can find effective resources online that provide options for quitting and specific tips on how to set the stage for success.”

One of the state’s new online resources, MyQuitPath.com, can help smokers who are getting ready to quit and those who are ready now. Smokers can find the resource that’s right for them among seven different linked sites.

The Web site highlights the Colorado QuitLine, a free telephone coaching service for quitting tobacco. Research shows smokers who use resources such as QuitLine and tobacco cessation medications such as nicotine patches are more than eight times more likely to quit smoking completely.

MyQuitPath.com also has an innovative online text messaging quitting tool, an interactive “laboratory” to evaluate the health effects of smoking and proven strategies for creating personal quit plans.

Cigarette smoking remains the leading cause of premature, preventable deaths in Colorado and is the single greatest driver of health care costs. More than 4,000 Coloradans die every year from tobacco-related illnesses. Smoking also leads to severe health problems, including cancer, heart disease and stroke.

People who stop smoking, however, can see immediate health benefits. Within 20 minutes after quitting, a smoker’s heart rate and blood pressure drop. Within 12 hours, the carbon monoxide levels in their blood have decreased. And as soon as two weeks after quitting, a smoker’s circulation and lung functions improve. Long-term ex-smokers can look forward to longer life

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spans and decreased risk of chronic diseases.

The State Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership implements a comprehensive program that uses effective and proven strategies to prevent and reduce tobacco use. The program administers the Colorado QuitLine, operated by National Jewish Health and funded through the Amendment 35 voter-approved tobacco tax.