

Are You Ready for 7-5-10?

Cigarette smoking is the most preventable cause of death in the U.S. Over 400,000 Americans die annually from the long term effects of smoking. 2009 Wisconsin Act 12, which was signed into law by Governor Doyle on May 18, 2009, deals with the growing concern over the health hazards associated with tobacco use and the effects of second-hand smoke. On July 5, 2010, smoking in WI will be mainly prohibited in public places and workplaces, whether publicly or privately owned, including bars and restaurants.

If you are currently allowed to smoke inside your workplace, on July 5 you will no longer be able to do so. Your employer may designate outdoor smoking areas that are a "reasonable distance" from any entrance to the facility, but you may be limited in how often you can leave the building, which will ultimately affect your tobacco habit.

Regardless of whether you've smoked for 6 months or 30 years, it is never too late to improve your odds by quitting. Short term benefits of tobacco cessation include:

- Heart rate decreases within twenty minutes of last cigarette
- Carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal
- Heart attack risk begins to drop and lung function improves within 2 weeks to 3 months of quitting
- Heart disease risk is half that of a smoker's within 1 year of quitting and back to that of a nonsmoker's 15 years post-quit
- Stroke risk decreases to half that of a smoker's within 5 to 15 years of quitting
- Lung cancer death rate is about half that of a smoker's and risk of other cancers also decreases

Quitting smoking (or chewing tobacco) takes hard work, but you can do it! Here are some tips to help you successfully quit using tobacco:

- 1) List your reasons for quitting and tell your family and friends so they can support your quit plan. Pick a quit date at least 2 to 3 weeks out.
- 2) Talk to your personal physician to find out if medication is right for you – some meds need to be started 1 -2 weeks prior to your quit date.
- 3) Call the WI Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-784-8669 to help you create a plan tailored to your needs.
- 4) Figure out how often you smoke or chew and what habits trigger your need to smoke like nicotine cravings, boredom, stress, drinking coffee or alcohol, driving in your car, etc. and change your routine. Take a walk instead of a smoke break; chew gum instead of tobacco; abstain from alcohol while you are trying to quit; drink tea instead of coffee, etc. Prior to quit day, start dropping a few of your "least important" cigarettes.
- 5) Make a list of all the things you could do with the extra money you'd save by not buying tobacco. Think of other rewards you'll get from not smoking. Make an appointment to get your teeth cleaned on quit day.
- 6) Prior to quit day, throw away all tobacco, matches or tins. Put away or toss out any lighters, spit cups or ashtrays.
- 7) On quit day, keep yourself very busy. Change your routine and try not to do activities that may trigger you to smoke or chew. Remind family, friends, and coworkers that this is your quit day and ask them to help and support you. Call the Quit Line noted above for ongoing support.
- 8) Congratulate yourself for every hour that you stay smoke-free. When cravings do hit, drink a glass of water, do something else, take deep breaths, do something else (i.e. take a walk), eat healthy snacks, or chew sugar-free gum or mints.
- 9) If you need additional support, consider joining a group tobacco cessation class or go to www.ffsonline.org or call 1-800-Lung USA or www.BecomeanEx.org for more information.

Good Luck! Don't get discouraged if you don't stay quit more than a few days or weeks. The average tobacco user has 5 to 7 quit attempts before they kick the habit for good. Remember, even one or two puffs of a cigarette after you've been quit for a period of time can get you hooked again.

Source: University of WI Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention.

If you are interested in learning more about Tobacco Cessation programs for your employees, contact John Lerand at Sensia Healthcare at 414-359-9440 or jlrand@sensiahealthcare.com

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