



# Helping Smokers Quit

A Guide for Clinicians

National Quitline

**1-800-QUIT NOW**



U.S. Department of Health  
and Human Services  
Public Health Service

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TOBACCO  
*free*  
NURSES

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**Quitting smoking may be one  
of the hardest things that your patients  
may ever have to do. Let them know that  
they don't have to do it alone**

VA Public Health Strategic Health Care Group



*open for medication chart*

# Ask about tobacco use at every visit.

Implement a system in your clinical setting that ensures that tobacco-use status is obtained and recorded at every patient contact.

**VITAL SIGNS**

Blood Pressure: \_\_\_\_\_ Weight: \_\_\_\_\_

Pulse: \_\_\_\_\_

Temperature: \_\_\_\_\_

Respiratory Rate: \_\_\_\_\_

Tobacco Use: **Current** **Former** **Never**  
(circle one)

Advise

# Advise tobacco users to quit.

Tell your patient

*“quitting smoking is the most important thing you can do to protect your health.”*



# Assess readiness to quit.

Ask every tobacco user if he/she is willing to quit at this time.

- ▶ If willing to quit, provide resources and assistance (see *Assist* section).
- ▶ If unwilling to quit, provide resources and help patient identify barriers to quitting.



# Assist tobacco users with a quit plan.

## Advise the smoker to:

- ▶ Set a quit date, ideally within 2 weeks.
- ▶ Get support from family, friends, and coworkers.
- ▶ Review past quit attempts—what helped, what led to relapse.
- ▶ Anticipate challenges, particularly during the critical first few weeks, including nicotine withdrawal.
- ▶ Identify reasons for quitting and benefits of quitting.

*(more)*



*(Assist continued)*

### **Give advice on successful quitting:**

- ▶ Total abstinence is essential—not even a single puff.
- ▶ Drinking alcohol is strongly associated with relapse.
- ▶ Having other smokers in the household hinders successful quitting.

### **Encourage use of pharmacotherapy:**

- ▶ Prescribe smoking cessation medications, such as the nicotine patch, gum or lozenge\*, or bupropion, unless contraindicated. See fold-out dosing chart.

### **Provide resources:**

- ▶ Call toll-free National Quitline at 1-800-QUIT NOW.
- ▶ Refer to Web sites for free materials:
  - Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality:  
[www.ahrq.gov/path/tobacco/htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/path/tobacco/htm)
  - Tobacco Free Nurses:  
[www.tobaccofreenurses.org](http://www.tobaccofreenurses.org)

Make cessation materials available that are appropriate by age, culture, language, education, and pregnancy status.

\* Approved by the FDA October 2002.



# Arrange followup visits.

Provide information for followup visits with his/her health care provider.

If a relapse occurs, encourage repeat quit attempt. Tell patient that relapse is part of the quitting process.

- ▶ Review circumstances that caused relapse. Use relapse as a learning experience.
- ▶ Reassess pharmacotherapy use and problems.
- ▶ Refer to National Quitline at 1-800-QUIT NOW.

Refer to Web sites for clinical practice guidelines on treating and managing tobacco use:

- Public Health Service: [www.ahrq.gov/path/tobacco/htm](http://www.ahrq.gov/path/tobacco/htm).
- Veterans Administration/Department of Defense: [www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/TUC3/TUC\\_Base.htm](http://www.oqp.med.va.gov/cpg/TUC3/TUC_Base.htm)

