

Quit Smoking Support Available

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If your New Year's resolution was to quit tobacco for good, you don't have to do it alone. QuitlineNC, the state's toll-free telephone support service to help tobacco users quit, is making nicotine replacement therapy (patches, gum or lozenges) available at no cost for a limited time for North Carolina residents who enroll in quit coaching. Funds for the medication came from this year's one-time transfer of money to the Department of Health and Human Services from the former Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

"Despite the General Assembly's elimination of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund, we are able to continue putting those dollars to work to reduce smoking rates and improve health in North Carolina," Governor Bev Perdue said. "This is a great opportunity for citizens to get the support they need to make a healthy lifestyle change in 2012."

The supply of nicotine replacement therapy includes enough for more than 9,500 residents and will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis. North Carolinians ready to quit smoking in 2012 may call the QuitlineNC at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) any time from 6 a.m. until 3 a.m., seven days a week, to sign up for over-the-counter medication and support. Callers who sign up for the four-call program will develop a personalized quit plan with a quit coach and may receive up to eight weeks of medication mailed to their homes.

Health officials say the combination of Quitline support and medication is a proven way to increase the odds that tobacco users will quit for good.

"Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) has been proven in well-designed research studies to significantly increase quit rates when used in combination with cessation counseling," State Health Director Jeff Engel said. "In fact, in 2010, six-month quit rates for QuitlineNC callers who used nicotine patches and coaching for eight weeks were twice as high as those who received coaching with little or no nicotine therapy."

Beth Lovette, Director of the Appalachian District Health Department, states, "This is a wonderful opportunity for our county residents to get help in quitting tobacco. Smoking rates are higher in Alleghany, Ashe and Watauga Counties than the states, and we know that counseling combined with appropriate medications is proven to work. We hope everyone who wants to quit will take advantage of the offer while supplies are still available."

QuitlineNC has provided North Carolina tobacco users with telephone quit coaching since 2005. More than 9,840 people used the service during 2010. QuitlineNC is offered in English and Spanish, with translation services available for other languages.