

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Please note: Experts and former smokers are available for one-on-one interviews. Whenever possible, please schedule in advance of Dec. 30.

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New Year's Resolution: 2 New Ways to Quit Smoking This Year

MADISON—Quitting smoking is a popular New Year's resolution, and this year there are two new ways to quit that weren't available last year: a new medication and a free quit-smoking program.

Seventy percent of people who smoke or chew tobacco want to quit, they just don't know how to succeed, according to Dr. Michael Fiore, director of the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI) and a national expert on quitting tobacco. Most try to quit without the benefit of treatments proven to improve their chances for success.

"Research shows the best way to quit is to see your doctor, use medication and get coaching on how to quit," Fiore said. "When we talk with smokers today, they say, 'Don't tell us why to quit, show us how to quit.' This New Year's, we have two new ways to offer."

1) Chantix. Chantix (varenicline) is a new medication just approved by the FDA for smoking cessation. It's designed to help people quit smoking by blocking the reinforcing effects of smoking and also reducing withdrawal systems. Only about five out of 100 smokers quit by going "cold turkey." In contrast, almost half of smokers who tried varenicline quit in a recent UW study. Don Schwenn was one of them. "If you want to see a grown man cry," he said, "take away cigarettes without medication." Schwenn said he quit with relative ease and Chantix was terrific.

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2) Operation Quit Tobacco. This program offers free nicotine patches or gum in a two-week “starter kit” to all military personnel who call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669). This program is available to troops on active duty, Wisconsin National Guard members, reservists and all veterans. Mark Mullikin, a 47-year-old veteran of the Army and Navy, quit smoking with the help of the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line, Zyban and the nicotine patch after smoking for 33 years. Mullikin recommends the Quit Line to anyone, especially fellow veterans.

“The more support you have the easier it is to quit,” Mullikin said. “The Quit Line coaches called me back in a couple of weeks, and I called them a few weeks after. You’re going to have ups and downs, but you have fewer as you go. I tell everyone the Quit Line will always be there to encourage you. It was wonderful.”

Thanks to support from the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, the Quit Line offers free, confidential, non-judgmental assistance for any Wisconsin resident who wants to quit smoking or chewing tobacco. It’s available from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. every day of the week. Quit Line coaches help each caller develop an individualized quit plan, offer tips and send free information via the mail. The Quit Line has assisted more than 50,000 callers since it was established in May of 2001.

Two New Ways to Quit:

- 1) **Chantix**, a new medication
- 2) **Operation Quit Tobacco**, a new program for troops and veterans

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line also offers free help at **1-800-QUIT-NOW**.

FINANCIAL HELP WITH QUITTING

While many smokers buy medications over the counter and pay out of pocket, many can’t afford to do so. There are a number of ways to get help.

Insurance Coverage for Quitting. According to a UW-CTRI survey, 74 percent of Wisconsinites with health insurance are covered for at least one medication to quit smoking. Patients should call their insurer for details on individual benefits.

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Medicaid and Medicare. Medicaid also covers doctor visits for help with quitting as well as FDA-approved medications—including Chantix, Zyban, and the nicotine patch, inhaler and nasal spray. (The nicotine lozenge is also FDA-approved but not covered by Medicaid.) Meanwhile, all Medicare plans are required to cover at least one quit-smoking medication. Coverage varies by plan.

Local Programs. In addition to the Quit Line, there are hundreds of local programs throughout the state where residents can get in-person assistance with quitting tobacco. Visit <http://www.ctr.wisc.edu/resources.html> or call the Quit Line to locate programs in your county.

Prescription Drug Programs. For under-insured individuals with low incomes, there are several new programs that either cover the entire cost of medications or offer a discount. For more information on these financial assistance programs, visit <http://www.ctr.wisc.edu/access> or call the Partnership for Prescription Assistance at 1-888-4PPA-NOW (888-477-2669).

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