



## News Release

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### **Free Stop-Smoking Medications Available in New Year** *Tax Bump Part of Unprecedented Moment to Help Smokers Quit*

At a news conference in Milwaukee today, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services and the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI) announced an expansion of quit line services for Wisconsin tobacco users who want to quit. This includes free medication for those who participate in quit line coaching, and a new interactive Web coaching service that provides personal tracking tools and discussion forums for those trying to quit.

These enhancements to the tried-and-true Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW) come at a critical time for the 800,000 tobacco users in the state. New Year's is a traditional time that smokers think about quitting. Additionally, the excise tax on cigarettes in Wisconsin will increase by \$1 per pack on Jan. 1. The expanded quit line services are designed to assist the great majority of Wisconsin smokers who want to quit and may try in response to the tax increase and the New Year.

Starting on Jan. 1, Wisconsin residents who call the Quit Line for coaching can obtain a free two-week starter kit of quit-smoking medications that will be mailed directly to their homes, either nicotine patches, gum or lozenges.

"I couldn't have quit without the Quit Line," said Shirley Reimer, who smoked for three decades before calling the Quit Line. "They helped. They care. I'm so glad they called. They saved my life."

Study after study has shown that providing medications in addition to quit line coaching is a cost-effective way to get large numbers of smokers to make a quit attempt. Additionally, 80 percent of smokers who have tried to quit but failed did not use evidence-based methods such as FDA-approved nicotine medications. Offering the no-cost nicotine-replacement therapy will lead more people into healthier lives. Combined with the Quit Line coaching, this will quadruple their likelihood of successfully quitting.

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“This is an unprecedented moment for Wisconsin,” said Dr. Michael Fiore, director of UW-CTRI. “We are capitalizing on that moment. The New Year, the tax increase, quit line coaching and the free medication represent a combined triumph over an addictive product that kills half of the people who use it. We now have the potential to spare thousands of Wisconsin families from the pain of losing loved ones to tobacco-related disease. I’m so pleased that Gov. Jim Doyle and the Legislature provided the leadership that enables us to offer this assistance to tobacco users and their families.”

Providing no-cost medication to a quit line increases the number of people who want to successfully quit. According to a recent study based on New York state’s experience, there was a 25-fold increase in the number of calls per day. Up to 35 percent of the callers who used medication along with the quit line are now smoke-free.

Currently, about 700 people call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line each month. With the enhancements we are announcing today, calls are expected to at least triple said Fiore.

In addition, on New Year’s Day, tobacco users can access a Web coach service designed to work hand-in-hand with the phone-based Quit Line. Between phone calls, tobacco users are encouraged to log on to build quit plans, track their progress, and interact with quit coaches and other smokers.

“Quitting smoking doesn’t happen overnight,” said State Health Officer Dr. Sheri Johnson. “It takes hard work and dedication, but smokers should know that they don’t have to do it alone. These expanded services are part of our commitment to helping smokers quit for good and another component of our comprehensive approach to fighting tobacco in Wisconsin.”

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line was established in 2001 and has served more than 50,000 Wisconsinites with free, nonjudgmental and confidential help. Quit coaches help create individualized quit plans. The plans include tips on how to live smoke free as well as provide contact information for local quit-tobacco programs throughout the state. Anyone can access this same list of local programs -- sorted by county -- by visiting [WiQuitLine.org](http://WiQuitLine.org).

All Quit Line users receive free print information in the mail after contacting the Quit Line either through the Web or by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW. At the caller’s request, quit coaches will call back up to four times to offer more free assistance.

The Quit Line is available from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week. At other times, callers can leave a message for a return call. Coaches fluent in many languages are available to callers.

The Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services contracts with UW-CTRI to provide services through the Quit Line.

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