

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 31, 2008

Contact: Moira Harrington, (608) 265-4447
Mh1@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu
Chris Hollenback, (608) 262-3902
Ch3@ctri.medicine.wisc.edu

Quit Line Expands Services for Pregnant Women Who Smoke

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line (1-800-QUIT-NOW) today announced expanded services for pregnant women who smoke. This is a critical enhancement of free individualized coaching services since Wisconsin is in the top 20 of all states for smokers in that vulnerable group.

"According to new tobacco-treatment guidelines released this spring by the U.S. Public Health Service, counseling can increase a smoker's chance of quitting by as much as four times versus trying it alone. Individualized counseling is just what the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line provides. On Aug. 1, the Quit Line will expand its services for pregnant women who currently receive assistance tailored to their needs. The expanded program will provide additional contact – up to 10 phone calls, including two postpartum – to prevent a return to smoking," said Kate Kobinsky, Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line coordinator. Many Quit Line users now take four calls.

Nearly 14 percent of the pregnant women in Wisconsin smoke, compared to the national average of 10 percent. That puts Wisconsin at number 18 in the overall U.S. ranking.

Pregnant women who smoke not only compromise their own health, but that of their baby. Cigarette smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of complications, premature delivery, low-birth-weight infants and stillbirth.

-More-

Quit Line staff also hope the enhanced services will assist new mothers.

“A fair number of women do quit while they are pregnant, but go back to it after they leave the hospital with their newborn. We are hoping,” Kobinsky said, “that with the Quit Line coaching extending past the birth of their babies, more women will remain tobacco free. Nursing mothers who smoke pass on nicotine to their babies through breast milk. Plus, secondhand smoke has been linked to sudden infant death syndrome.”

Tommi Thompson, finance and operations director with the Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation (wwhf.org) praised the expanded Quit Line services and discussed her organization's complementary program, “Through our First Breath Program, we encourage healthcare providers to use prenatal and postpartum visits to get women to do something about their tobacco use. The expanded telephone counseling is an added, and beneficial, way to help women quit and stay quit.”

First Breath is a statewide initiative with 100 sites that has helped more than 5,000 pregnant smokers since 2001.

The Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line provides free, confidential and nonjudgmental coaching. It is available from 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. seven days a week. Messages left after those hours will be returned within two days. People can also reach the Quit Line through wiquitline.org online. In either instance, a smoker interacts with a trained counselor to get practical and proven-effective advice. Since its inception in 1991, the Quit Line has helped more than 80,000 Wisconsin residents.

The Quit Line is managed by the University of Wisconsin Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI) and is funded by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services.

###