

UW-CTRI News Release

Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention, UW School of Medicine and Public Health

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UW Researchers Publish New Recommendations on Quitting Smoking in *New England Journal of Medicine*

(MADISON) – Two University of Wisconsin (UW) doctors have published guidelines in the Sept. 29 edition of the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* on how to quit smoking with a new tip—to begin doing three things *before* actually quitting smoking altogether:

1. Cut down on cigarettes smoked per day as much as possible.
2. Start receiving coaching on how to quit by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW.
3. Talk to your doctor to discuss whether starting medication before you quit is right for you.

In the past, even doctors and researchers weren't sure that starting medication while smoking would be safe and beneficial, but a new body of research has shown that to be true. Substantially and persistently reducing daily smoking as much as possible can help, wrote authors Dr. Michael Fiore and Dr. Tim Baker, lead researchers at the UW Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention (UW-CTRI).

A meta-analysis of seven placebo-controlled studies involving 2,767 smokers who were initially unwilling to quit showed that the abstinence rate six months after the initiation of treatment was significantly higher among smokers who were randomly assigned to nicotine-replacement therapy (nicotine gum, inhaler, or patch) for six months compared to those who weren't. Another study, involving 1,154 smokers who were initially unwilling to quit, showed a benefit associated with the use of nicotine gum or patches for only two months.

In one study conducted by UW-CTRI, Donna Hoekstra had been reluctant to quit but tried counseling and medication before even setting a quit date. "Gradually doing this, I could go four (or) five hours and not even think about a cigarette." Eventually, Hoekstra set a quit date, stopped smoking, and hasn't smoked since.

Smokers should see their doctor or call the Wisconsin Tobacco Quit Line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free help with quitting smoking. Tobacco use remains the number-one preventable killer of Americans, and costs the economy nearly \$200 billion a year in health-care expenses and lost worker productivity.