

Help Your Clients, Consumers and Patients Begin 2012 Tobacco Free

QuitlineNC, the state's free telephone coaching service to help tobacco users quit, has free nicotine replacement therapy (patches, gum or lozenges) available for a limited time for North Carolina residents, 18 years of age and older, who enroll in quit coaching.

Funds for the medication were made available to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services' Division of Public Health from the former Health and Wellness Trust Fund. The supply includes enough for more than 9,500 residents and will be available on a first-come, first-serve basis until the funding runs out.

Any North Carolinian ready to quit their dependence on tobacco in 2012 can call the QuitlineNC at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) any time from 6 a.m. until 3 a.m. daily to sign up for the free over-the-counter medication (NRT) and support.

The Quit Coaches are meticulously trained to conduct a behavioral assessment for medical conditions that may complicate NRT use. Quit Coaches use a database-supported algorithm to accurately provide decision support for the use of NRT products based on the caller's current nicotine intake level and their previous use of the NRT products.

Quit Coaches are well-versed in the potential side effects of using NRT, correct use instructions, recognizing symptoms of nicotine toxicity, and, most importantly, understanding the psychological and behavioral aspects of combining NRT with cessation counseling. In addition, Quit Coaches have access to on-site physicians (Abigail Halperin, MD, Associate Medical Director) for assistance with complex case management. Use-precautions that cause the Coach to tell the participant that they must get the approval of their physician to use NRT include:

- Heart attack within the last 2 weeks.
- Stroke or TIA (temporary stroke") within the last 2 weeks.
- Currently pregnant
- Diagnosed within last 6 months with very rapid or irregular heartbeat that required a change in activities or to take medication.
- Diagnosed within last 6 months with serious or worsening angina.
- Previous adverse reaction to using a patch medication or adhesive tape causing them to discontinue the patch.

"Nicotine replacement therapy is a proven way to increase the odds that a tobacco user will be able to quit for good," said State Health Director Dr. Jeff Engel. "By making this offering, we hope to double participation in QuitlineNC over last year and help even more people in North Carolina quit successfully."

QuitlineNC has provided North Carolina tobacco users with telephone quit coaching since 2005. More than 9,840 people used the service during 2010. Quitline is offered in English and Spanish, with translation services available for other languages as well. Callers who are ready to set a quit date will receive three more additional coaching calls and up to eight weeks of the free medication mailed to their homes. The medication will help support the personalized quit plan they develop with a Quit Coach.

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