

Health professionals should not smoke

Doctors and other health-care workers are most effective in assisting patients to quit when they serve as role models by not smoking themselves. Their effectiveness increases further if they are visibly involved in local and national tobacco control activities.

In some countries, a high proportion of physicians smoke – particularly male physicians. In addition to setting a deadly example for their patients, doctors who smoke undermine tobacco control messages and policies.



Cessation advice area at a hospital in Beijing, China.

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Quit lines are effective

Advice and counselling can also be provided in the form of telephone quit lines. These should:

- Be free of charge
- Provide information similar to that available from in-person counselling
- Be staffed by live operators, rather than use pre-recorded messages
- Be accessible to the public at convenient times

Where feasible, additional cessation materials and links to more intensive counselling should be provided.

Quit lines are most useful in countries where telephone service is universal and the public is accustomed to making phone calls for services.

Quit lines require financing and training of staff to answer incoming calls and provide appropriate counselling or referral for services.

Quit line follow-up is important

Quit lines are most effective when staff take proactive measures to make follow-up phone calls to check on progress and provide encouragement to:

- Quit
- Maintain abstinence
- Make another quit attempt in case of relapse

Multiple follow-up calls at regular intervals have the greatest likelihood of keeping people committed to long-term cessation.

Emerging communications technologies such as text messaging and social networking web sites can also be effective.



Quit line details on a cigarette packet, Australia.

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Cessation medications are effective

Cessation medications can double or triple the likelihood of successfully quitting.

The highest quit rates are achieved when cessation support is combined with medication.

Medication is also effective when provided separately.

Prescription medications should be provided through the health-care system. At least some form of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) should be available over-the-counter without prescription at retail pharmacies.



Nicotine gum.

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There are two main types of cessation medication available:

- NRT (patches, lozenges, gum, oral inhalers and nasal spray).
- Prescription-only medicines such as bupropion and varenicline. These are intended for short-term therapy.

Two forms of NRT are included on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines.

Cessation programmes are politically feasible

Cessation programmes generally encounter few political obstacles. They help foster support for policies to reduce tobacco use, an important step in creating a tobacco-free society.

Cessation programmes enable governments to help those most directly affected by the epidemic at the same time as they enact new restrictions on tobacco.

Most countries can use lower-cost counselling options effectively, even if funds for medications are limited.

This may also reduce opposition to other tobacco control policies.

Governments can use tobacco tax revenues – ultimately collected from smokers themselves – to subsidize cessation services.



Measuring lung function on World No Tobacco Day in Mexico City to encourage cessation.

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Cessation services are cost-effective

Clinical cessation services are much more cost-effective than most other health-care system activities. They are most effective when combined with other MPOWER measures.

While cessation services have a smaller population impact than other MPOWER interventions (such as tax increases, bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship, anti-tobacco advertising and establishment of smoke-free places), they have a great impact on individual health.

The risks of developing a tobacco-related illness are significantly reduced within a few years among those who quit smoking before they develop such an illness, regardless of their age.

mpower

Offer help to quit tobacco use

