

Quitting tobacco can put you on a path to a healthier life

By Kori Anderson

Cigarette smoking, although becoming less common over the past several years, remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. In Montana, about 1,600 adults die each year from smoking related diseases.

Smoking is linked to numerous health issues including cancer, heart disease and respiratory illnesses. Montanans spend about \$511 million on healthcare costs each year due to tobacco use. Tobacco use can cause cancer throughout the body, not just in the lungs. In Montana, 2,400 new cases of tobacco associated cancer are diagnosed each year, accounting for 40% of all new cancers.

Nicotine, the addictive substance in tobacco products, makes smoking one of the strongest addictions to overcome, often requiring multiple attempts to quit. In Montana, about half of the current 200,000 smokers tried to quit at least once in the past year. While quitting is not easy, it can be done with the right support and tools. Without outside support, the odds of successfully quitting smoking are about 1 in 20.

Quit Now Montana is a free program that helps users quit using cigarettes, cigars, cigarillos, e-cigarettes, chew and nicotine pouches. The free program, open seven days a week, provides a personalized quit plan, coaching calls and nicotine replacement therapies. Quit Now Montana also offers specialized quit lines tailored to teens (My Life, My Quit), pregnant individuals, (Quit Now Montana, Pregnancy Program), and Native American/American Indians (American Indian Commercial Tobacco Quit Line).

You do not have to be ready to quit to benefit from these resources. The coaches at Quit Now Montana are prepared to meet you where you are and help you on your way to a smoke-free life. For more information visit www.quitnowmontana.com or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

For more ways to support your tobacco-free journey, try these tips from the American Cancer Society:

- Create a tobacco-free environment by distancing yourself from people and places that give you the urge to smoke.
- Distract yourself with sugar-free gum, hand candy, toothpicks or a straw when you feel the urge to smoke.
- Keep yourself busy. Activities like walking, doing yard work or a new hobby are great ways to release energy and distract yourself from the urge to smoke.
- Practice mindfulness through deep breathing, stretching, dancing and embracing emotions.
- Delay the urge to smoke, vape or chew by telling yourself to wait 10 minutes. Often the simple trick of delaying tobacco use will allow you to move past your urge to use.

If you are thinking about quitting or ready to quit, reach out for help. It is never too late to quit using tobacco and reducing your risk of cancer and other health problems.

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