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## SMOKING CESSATION IN ALASKA

In 1995, approximately 102,700 Alaskan adults were current smokers. Of these, 55% intended to quit smoking, and over half of these intended to quit within 1-6 months (Table 1).

Table 1: Attitude of Alaska Smokers about Smoking Behavior<sup>1</sup>

	<u>Percent of Smokers</u>
Intend to quit in 1-6 months	34%
Intend to quit after 6 months	21%
Not sure/other	20%
Do not intend to quit	26%

As of 1995, an estimated 111,090 Alaskan adults were ex-smokers: 27% of ex-smokers had quit over 15 years prior to the survey; 34% between 5 and 15 years; 27% between 1 and 5 years, and 9% during the previous year.<sup>1</sup>

Only 36% of current smokers reported that they had been advised to quit smoking by a health care provider in the past year<sup>1</sup>. The implementation of the increased Alaskan tobacco tax provides an opportune time for health care providers to encourage smokers to stop smoking.

### Smoking Cessation for Primary Care Clinicians<sup>2</sup>

#### *Clinical Practice Guidelines*

- Each person who smokes or uses tobacco should be offered cessation treatment at every office visit
- Clinicians should ask about and record the tobacco use status of every patient
- Cessation treatment even as brief as 3 minutes a visit is effective
- The more intense the treatment, the more effective it is in producing long-term abstinence from tobacco
- Nicotine replacement therapy (nicotine gum or patches), social support, and skills training are effective components of smoking cessation treatment

#### *Strategies for Smoking Cessation Intervention:*

- **ASK** Systematically identify all tobacco users at every visit by implementing an office wide system that queries and documents tobacco use.
- **ADVISE** In a clear, strong, and personalized manner, urge every smoker to quit.
- **ASSIST** Assist with a quit plan and set a quit date. Encourage nicotine replacement therapy except in special circumstances. (For more information on prescribing, precautions and side effects, see the Clinical Practice Guidelines<sup>2</sup>). Give key advice on successful quitting. Provide supplementary materials.
- **ARRANGE** Schedule follow up contact either in person or via telephone, preferably during the first week after the quit date and then again within the first month.

#### *Relapse Prevention*

Every ex-smoker should be congratulated and receive encouragement to stay quit. The benefits and success of cessation, as well as related problems and anticipated problems should be discussed.

#### **Benefits of Quitting<sup>3</sup>**

- After 1 year off cigarettes, the excess risk of heart disease caused by smoking is reduced by half;
- After 5 to 15 years off cigarettes, the risk of stroke for ex-smokers returns to the level of those who have never smoked;
- After 10 years, the risk of lung cancer for ex-smokers drops to as much as one-half that of continuing smokers;
- After 15 years, the risk of death for ex-smokers returns to nearly the level of persons who have never smoked;
- Men who quit smoking between ages 35 and 39 add an average of 5 years to their lives; women add 3 years;
- Ex-smokers who have been off cigarettes for many years are less likely to die of chronic lung diseases;
- Among women who quit before pregnancy or during the first trimester the risk of delivering a low birthweight baby is reduced to that of a nonsmoker.

#### **Quit Smoking and Live....Better!**

As of October 1, 1997 the price of cigarettes in Alaska was increased by \$0.71 per pack, with a comparable increase for cigar, snuff and chewing tobacco. The increased cost of tobacco products is one of the many reasons to quit using tobacco this year. The American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association and the Alaska Native Health Board are supporting smoking cessation efforts in Alaska with a campaign entitled "Quit Smoking and Live...Better!" For additional information, contact the agencies using the numbers below. As part of the campaign, the American Lung Association will be providing a workshop October 24-25 entitled "Freedom from Smoking: Train the Trainer." The workshop will provide instruction in how to help others quit smoking. For information, call 907-263-2085. This year the Great American Smokeout will be on Thursday, November 20. The Great American Smokeout is the day on which the American Cancer Society urges all smokers to quit smoking.

**References:** 1. Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Survey Data, Alaska Division of Public Health, unpublished data, 1995.

2. Clinical Practice Guideline, Number 18, Smoking Cessation, USDHHS, Public Health Service, Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, AHCPR Publication No. 96-0692, April 1996

3. The Health Benefits of Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General, 1990, USDHHS, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia.

**Resources:**

AHCPR Publications Clearinghouse	1-800-358-9295 <a href="http://www.ahcpr.gov/guide/">http://www.ahcpr.gov/guide/</a>
American Lung Association	907-276-5864
American Heart Association	263-2044 (Anchorage) 1-800-242-8721 (outside of Anchorage)
American Cancer Society	277-8696 (Anchorage) 1-800-478-9355 (outside of Anchorage)
Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control program	907-465-8641
Alaska Native Health Board	907-562-6006
Cancer Information Service	1-800-422-6237