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## Have a plan of attack to quit smoking

By **Flori Meeks**, contributing writer

Overcoming a physical addiction never is easy, but many people find the habit of smoking can be harder to kick than the tobacco itself when they try to become non-smokers.

Someone who smokes eight times a day, for instance, will light up 14,600 times over five years. "Think about how many times you're reinforcing that habit," says Jodi Brucia, a family nurse practitioner with **Graham Health Center**. "It's tough, and it's tricky, and it will sabotage you if you're not prepared for it."

If you want to successfully give up smoking, it's important to stay focused on the benefits of quitting. Smoking is a costly habit in every way possible. The American Lung Association (ALA) estimates that smoking-related diseases claim about 430,700 American lives each year. Smoking costs the United States about \$97.2 billion each year in health-care costs and lost productivity.

Smoking is directly responsible for 87 percent of lung cancer cases and causes most cases of emphysema and chronic bronchitis. It's also a major cause of heart disease and many types of cancer. Cigarettes create an additional hazard to the people exposed to secondhand smoke.

The good news is the damage caused by smoking can be reversed by quitting in most cases. The body responds almost immediately, says the ALA, which mapped out the effects in the following time frame:

- About 20 minutes after quitting, blood pressure decreases, the pulse rate drops and the body temperature of hands and feet increases.
- At eight hours, the carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal while the oxygen in the blood increases to normal.
- At 24 hours, the chance of a heart attack decreases.
- At 48 hours, nerve endings start re-growing, and the ability to smell and taste is enhanced.

The benefits continue years after quitting. At the 15-year mark, the risk of coronary heart disease is similar to that of people who have never smoked. The risk of death returns to nearly the level of people who have never smoked.

If you decide you do want to quit, it's wise to approach your goal with a plan of attack. Experts recommend setting a quit date and marking it on your calendar. Write down your reasons for quitting and look at them often.

Figure out when, where and why you usually smoke. These are your "triggers." Learn to recognize them and think of things you can do instead when you want to smoke. If you smoke when you're stressed, plan to exercise instead. If you smoke after a meal, plan to brush your teeth instead.

After you quit, remove smoking reminders like cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays from your home and workplace. Consider cleaning your furniture and carpets to remove the smell of smoke.

Don't hesitate to enlist help. You can talk to your doctor about nicotine replacement therapy and look into smoking cessation classes.

Oakland's **Graham Health Center** offers a program developed by the ALA called Freedom from Smoking. The eight-week program, which emphasizes behavioral therapies, is available to students, faculty, staff and the community every semester. It starts with a free session and individual counseling when participants can decide if the program is right for them.

Those who decide to participate develop personalized plans for dealing with potential pitfalls and ensuring success. They work in group sessions and complete short home assignments.

The program costs \$50 for students and \$70 for faculty, staff and the community.

"The cost is really about commitment," Brucia says. "It's a little harder to quit the program when you've spent that money on it."

For more information about the Freedom from Smoking program, call the **Graham Health Center** at (248) 370-2341.

***This is the seventh article in a series on health-related issues. By being an informed health-care consumer, OU employees can help contain and reduce benefit costs to the university.***

#### **SUMMARY**

The American Lung Association estimates that smoking-related diseases claim about 430,700 American lives each year. Smoking costs the United States about \$97.2 billion each year in health-care costs and lost productivity. If you want to successfully give up smoking, it's important to stay focused on the benefits of quitting.

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