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Holiday Season an Opportunity for Tobacco-Free Living

The holiday season has arrived, and there is no better time for people to adopt a healthy, tobacco-free lifestyle.

During the holidays, people often gather with family and friends. This is an opportunity to encourage and support tobacco users in their efforts to quit. Maintaining a smoke-free home protects friends and family, including children, pregnant women, the elderly, and those living with disabilities from the health harms caused by secondhand smoke. Parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends have the opportunity to impact the kids in their lives by setting an example of a tobacco-free lifestyle and reminding them that the use of tobacco, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco products is harmful.

According to the American Cancer Society, the benefits of quitting smoking are immediate. Blood pressure drops within 20 minutes, and within 24 hours a person's chance of heart attack decreases. The benefits continue for years, including reduced risk of lung cancer, stroke, and heart disease.

"Quitting tobacco can be challenging because nicotine is a highly addictive drug. But whether a person chooses to quit during the holiday season, or as a New Year's resolution, there are resources available to help," stated Katie Joyce, Community Health Coordinator for the Health Department of Northwest Michigan.

Research shows that while quitting is difficult for most tobacco users, people who use tobacco can increase their success in quitting with help. Quitters are most successful when using a combination of strategies. Helpful resources include nicotine replacement, counseling, self-help materials, and a strong support network of family and friends.

The Michigan Tobacco Quitline is an evidence-based service that continues to provide free telephone coaching for the uninsured, pregnant women, residents enrolled in Medicaid and Medicare, veterans, cancer patients, and American Indians, and free nicotine replacement therapy to those who qualify. The Quitline provides services including materials, text messaging, an online program, and referral to all Michigan residents.

Providers can refer their patients and clients to the Quitline, and individual tobacco users can contact the Quitline directly at 1-800-784-8669, or enroll online at <https://michigan.quitlogix.org>. More information, including a fax referral form for providers, is available at the website. Staff and providers in all health care settings can refer patients and clients to the Michigan Tobacco Quitline.

In addition, the National Cancer Institute offers free resources and advice on making a quit plan that can help with quitting smoking. These resources are available at www.smokefree.gov.

Tobacco use kills 16,200 Michigan residents and costs the state over \$4.5 billion in smoking-related healthcare costs annually. In Michigan, 5,200 kids become new, regular smokers each year. The CDC recommends that Michigan spend \$110 million on tobacco prevention and control programming. Michigan spends just \$1.6 million. In contrast, the tobacco industry spends an estimated \$295 million to market their products in Michigan each year.

"The holidays can be a stressful time, but smoking doesn't have to be a part of them," said Joyce. "Calling the Michigan Tobacco Quitline now can help people make the holidays, and 2018, tobacco-free. Quitting tobacco today will lead to a lifetime of health benefits."

Hospice of Northwest Michigan is a partner of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. The health department is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, please contact Katie Joyce at the health department at 231-350-2064 or call the Michigan Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

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