



STATE OF OKLAHOMA

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Free nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges now available through Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline – while supplies last

Two-week “starter kits” offered free in observance of Father’s Day

OKLAHOMA CITY – In observance of Father’s Day and to focus attention on encouraging men to quit tobacco, free nicotine replacement products are being offered for the first time ever to all qualified Oklahomans who call the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). Starting today, the products are available to both men and women while supplies last.

The free “starter kit” contains a two-week supply of nicotine patches, gum or lozenges, depending on each caller’s needs, to help callers jump-start their quit attempt. In combination with the free phone-based coaching available through the Helpline, these products greatly increase the chances that a tobacco user will successfully quit.

“We’re very excited to make this free offer to help Oklahomans celebrate Father’s Day in a healthy way,” said Tracey Strader, executive director of the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust. “Studies have shown that kids whose parents use tobacco are much more likely to become tobacco users. Father’s Day is all about families, and there’s no better way to say ‘I love you’ than to quit for your health and the health of your family.”

“Most Oklahomans who smoke want to completely quit smoking,” said State Health Commissioner Dr. Mike Crutcher, “but the addiction to nicotine is strong. Now every Oklahoman who wants to quit using tobacco products has access to some of the most effective help available.”

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The Father's Day program focuses on encouraging men to quit tobacco because:

- Men who smoke increase their risk of death from lung cancer by more than 22 times, and from bronchitis and emphysema by nearly 10 times. In Oklahoma, two-thirds (67 percent) of all tobacco-caused cancer disease deaths are among men.
- Cigarette smokers are two to four times more likely to develop coronary heart disease than non-smokers. In Oklahoma, 60 percent of all tobacco-caused cardiovascular disease deaths are among men.
- Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents and smokeless tobacco use in Oklahoma is 20 times higher among men than among women.
- In Oklahoma, over 3,500 men die each year from tobacco-caused diseases, including over 1,100 men who die from smoking-caused cancers of the trachea, lung, or bronchus, over 1,200 men who die from smoking-caused cardiovascular disease, and over 800 men who die from smoking-caused respiratory diseases such as emphysema.
- According to the Surgeon General, smoking cessation may reduce prostate cancer deaths.

“Although program funds are not sufficient to provide a standard eight weeks of nicotine replacement therapy for all callers,” said Strader, “we hope the starter kits will encourage them to take the first step in a successful quit attempt and to complete their treatment with products obtained through their health insurance or with the money saved by not purchasing tobacco products.”

Launched in September 2003, the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline is supported by earnings from the Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust and state tobacco tax funds made available through the Oklahoma State Department of Health.

Professional Quit Coaches™ work with Helpline callers to develop a quit plan tailored to their individual needs. Up to four follow-up calls with a Quit Coach are also provided free of charge. The Helpline's hours of operation are 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. seven days a week, and staff will return any messages left after hours. Services are also available in Spanish by calling 1-800-793-1552. For more information on the Helpline, please see: www.tset.ok.gov/programs/helpline.html.

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