

WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE
106 East 6th Avenue, Cheyenne, WY 82002
Contact: Denise Burke (307) 777-2450
June 8, 2016

*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Smoking Cessation in Wyoming

CHEYENNE, Wyo - Smoking remains the leading preventable cause of premature disease and death in the United States. While the percentage of adults in Wyoming who smoke has dropped slightly, it is still reported that 19.5% of Wyomingites smoke compared to the national average of 16.8%. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the number of high school age smokers in Wyoming exceeds the national percentage of smokers in the same age group. Over 800 residents die annually from smoking and an estimated 12,000 children are adversely affected by second-hand smoke.

Seventy percent of those using tobacco – the leading cause of preventable early death and disease in the U.S. – want to quit. But because tobacco is more addictive than even most illegal drugs, quitting is not easy. Less than 10 percent of smokers quit cold turkey.

The good news is that medication combined with the right support can dramatically increase the odds of success. Those who try to quit are three times more likely to succeed with counseling and medication than without.

In 2010, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) required health insurers to put tobacco cessation treatment in all health plans without any cost to the patient. In 2014, the federal government told insurers to make treatment openly available with no barriers to those who wished to quit tobacco. Quitting tobacco is difficult enough and confusion or barriers for those seeking help should be eliminated. All tobacco users who want to quit, should know that they qualify for smoking cessation options. Each cessation attempt includes four tobacco cessation counseling sessions of at least 10 minutes each (including telephone counseling, group counseling, and individual counseling) and all FDA-approved tobacco cessation medications (including both prescription and over-the-counter medications) for a 90-day treatment regimen when prescribed by a health care provider. These benefits should be available without prior authorization.

Tobacco cessation treatment is powerful and effective. It saves lives, money and helps prevent future generations from becoming addicted.

In the 50th Anniversary Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Kathleen Sebelius, stated, " Fifty years after the release of the first Surgeon General's report warning of the health hazards of smoking, we have learned how to end the tobacco epidemic. Over the past five decades, scientists, researchers and policy makers have determined what works, and what steps must be taken if we truly want to bring to a close one of our nation's most tragic battles—one that has killed ten times the number of Americans who died in all of our nation's wars combined. Acting Surgeon General Boris Lushniak issued the "Let's Make the Next Generation Tobacco-free" challenge. To meet this ambitious but achievable goal, we must ensure that everyone who wants to quit tobacco has the resources and treatment they need to succeed.

Wyoming Insurance Commissioner Tom Glause encourages Wyoming citizens to stop smoking today. Contact your local health insurance agent or representative and determine what smoking cessation options are available to you.