



National Guidelines on Smoking Cessation Treatment

Smoking is more than just a habit. For most people, nicotine addiction from smoking is a chronic, relapsing medical condition that requires a dedicated effort to quit. Overall, in any given year, fewer than 5 percent of smokers in the U.S. succeed in quitting.

However, studies have shown that a combination of medication and behavioral counseling can increase a smoker's odds of quitting successfully.

National Guidelines for Smoking Cessation Treatment

Comprehensive smoking cessation benefits are recommended by national guidelines (ie, Public Health Service and the Community Preventative Services Task Force sponsored by the CDC and WHO¹) and should include:

- Both counseling and medications, including prescription and over the counter cessation aids.
- At least four counseling sessions of at least 30 minutes per session
- Elimination or minimization of co-pays and deductibles for treatment.

According to CDC-sponsored guidelines:

“Numerous effective pharmacotherapies for smoking cessation now exist. Except in the presence of contraindications, these should be used with all patients attempting to quit.”

“Tobacco dependence treatments are both clinically effective and cost-effective relative to other medical and disease prevention interventions. As such, insurers and purchasers should ensure that: *All insurance plans include as a reimbursed benefit the counseling and pharmacotherapeutic treatments identified as effective in this guideline; and clinicians are reimbursed for providing tobacco dependence treatment just as they are reimbursed for treating other chronic conditions.*”

Unfortunately many smokers don't have access to the treatments that can help.

- Although the CDC says it is the most cost-effective treatment that can be given to adults, only 24 percent of employers provide coverage for smoking cessation treatments.
- Coverage for smoking cessation treatments is not a standard part of health insurance packages. Employers need to purchase “riders” for smoking cessation treatments as though they are “lifestyle medications.”

Health care reforms are needed to increase the number of smokers who are able to quit.

- Health care providers should have incentives and training to encourage them to discuss smoking cessation approaches with their patients who smoke and want to quit.
- Employers should provide coverage for smoking cessation treatments to help employees quit.
- Health plans should include smoking cessation treatments as paid or covered services for all subscribers or members of health insurance packages.

¹ Fiore MC, Bailey WC, Cohen SJ, et al. *Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence. Clinical Practice Guideline*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service. June 2000.