

January-February 2014

Ask your Pharmacist about Smoking Cessation... or what if your Pharmacist asks you about Smoking Cessation?

People are aware. It is not a secret that smoking is an addiction. And despite evidence that it causes premature death, smoking remains very difficult, if not impossible for some people to quit.

As a result, since 2011 the Ontario government allows pharmacists, (those certified in smoking cessation) to enroll patients who are covered by the Ontario Drug Benefit in a one-year support program for a total of nine “consulting sessions.”

Here we are, one more member of the Health Care profession engaged in the support patients who want to try for the first time, or one more time, to stop smoking. There are no limits on the number of times someone may try to stop smoking and data suggest, it takes an average of seven times to successfully stop smoking, with each “try” becoming easier.



What does this mean for you?

Don't be surprised if your pharmacist ASKS the following TWO simple questions :

- ***How interested are you to quit smoking for GOOD?***
- ***How confident are you to do what it takes to quit smoking for GOOD?***

The most determinant factor predicting success is a person's confidence. If a person is not very confident, evidence shows that this person will struggle. So the role of the health care professional and supporters (family, friends, co-workers) is to boost the person's confidence.

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There are multiple Ways to stop smoking

Cold Turkey

Cold Turkey may work for people who have a good social network and who are extremely motivated to stop smoking.

Nicotine Replacement

Reducing gradually may also be working for some. This is why a pharmacist may recommend short form use of nicotine replacement (gums, lozenges, spray, inhalers) and taper slowly over six months to one year.

Pharmacotherapy

Pharmacotherapy with Zyban (bupropion) or Champix (varenicline) works well for some people, particularly when counseling forms part of the strategy. Additionally Champix is more effective than Zyban. Both agents can be prescribed by physicians, nurse practitioners and pharmacists.

CHAMPIX

Champix is usually well tolerated with nausea being the most common side effect and decreasing the dose can be helpful. Although the psychiatric side effects associated with Champix are anecdotal, it is “good practice” to educate the person about possible feelings of depression and mood swings and to recommend they seek a physician’s advice if these symptoms occur.

ZYBAN

Zyban is recommended for can people who have fear of weight gain while quitting smoking. It is also a good choice for people with a history of depression.

Drug interactions should be reviewed with the pharmacist.

**So please, do not be surprised if, at the pharmacy counter, you are asked about your smoking status. One day you will answer,
“I stopped six months ago!”**

Yes, it’s difficult but not impossible!