

# Invest in Tobacco Cessation for a Healthy, Productive Workforce<sup>1</sup>

## Smoking Costs Business

In Ohio, about one in four adults smoke. Smoking-related health care costs total nearly \$4.4 million annually in Ohio or \$1,623 per smoker, and smokers use health care 50 percent more than non-smokers. A study of six large employers found that former smokers cost the companies an extra \$2 million annually. Add the cost of lost productivity, absenteeism and the potential for devastating illness and death and the cost to your business more than doubles.

Your business spends more than \$3,931 per smoker per year when you factor in:

- Greater health care costs
- Increased absenteeism
- Work time spent on smoking rituals
- Higher life insurance premium costs
- Greater risk of occupational injuries
- Costlier disability
- More disciplinary actions

## You Can Help

Seventy percent of Americans who smoke say they want to quit. But any smoker will tell you that it is not easy to quit. Usually people take two or three tries, or more, before finally being able to quit for good. But there are proven methods to make quitting tobacco easier. Research shows that smokers are two to three times more likely to quit when they have help than when they try to quit on their own.

Employers have an important role in helping smokers quit. For most employers, this means adding coverage for cessation services to their health insurance benefits because 64 percent of Americans receive their health coverage through their employer. Right now, about 24 percent of employers provide any coverage for tobacco cessation treatment.

Ohio is fortunate to have a free tobacco cessation quitline provided by the Ohio Department of Health (ODH). That toll-free number is 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-7848669). Many employers and health plans have joined with ODH to share the cost of nicotine patches with ODH so that quitting becomes even easier. A recent report in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* ranked smoking cessation services second only to childhood vaccination for its value for disease prevention and cost effectiveness. Tobacco cessation is also cost-beneficial; employers have seen a return on investment in three years with benefits sooner, especially increases in productivity and reductions in health care costs for pregnant smokers.

An effective benefit combines several proactive quitline sessions with medications, including nicotine patches, gum and/or Zyban for a cost of about 38 cents per member per month. In addition, eliminating financial barriers to quitting (e.g., co-payments) helps get more people into treatment.

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<sup>1</sup> References available from [BRFSS@odh.ohio.gov](mailto:BRFSS@odh.ohio.gov).

Having smoke-free buildings and grounds gives smoking employees more of an incentive to quit.

**This year alone, nearly 19,000 Ohioans will die prematurely because of tobacco use.**

Thousands more will become terribly ill with tobacco-related cancer, heart, or respiratory disease. Some of these people work for you. Others are the spouse, child, parent or friend of someone who works for you.

Tobacco costs—physically, emotionally and economically. You can cut those costs and improve your employees' health and productivity by helping them quit tobacco.

*"America business is awakening to the growing importance of its 'human capital' – the capabilities, knowledge, experience, wellness, and full potential of its people," according to IHPM, a nonprofit that links employee health to corporate success. "Yet many employers do not realize the relationship of the employees' health to corporate performance. While striving to contain the rising medical costs that put them at a disadvantage against global competitors, they are missing the competitive advantage their company can gain from investing wisely in the health-and thereby, the productivity – of their work force."*

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