Tobacco Recovery Guide

Reference and Resource Guide for Providers

HIGHMARK HEALTH OPTIONS | HIGHMARK

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Overview

Tobacco remains the single largest cause of preventable diseases and deaths in the United States. [1] Highmark Health Options/Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield (hereafter "Highmark") is dedicated to supporting providers in integrating comprehensive tobacco recovery strategies into their practice.

To align with the Delaware Division of Public Health and the IMPACT Delaware Tobacco Prevention Coalition's increased focus on preventing and reducing tobacco use across the state, Highmark has enhanced its efforts to support members in tobacco recovery.

Highmark recognizes that providers play a pivotal role in helping members quit or reduce their use of tobacco and nicotine products. This guide offers essential resources to assist providers in caring for Highmark members. For more information on the five-year plan for a tobacco free Delaware please visit The Five-Year Plan for a Tobacco-Free Delaware 2023-2027.

Screening for Tobacco Use

Screening for tobacco use and vaping should begin at age 11 and continue at least annually through adulthood.

Suggested Screening Tools include:

- Hooked on Nicotine (HONC)
- E-cigarette Dependence Scale
- Modified Fagerstrom Tolerance Questionnaire [2]

Brief Interventions to Support Tobacco Recovery

While challenging, many individuals desire to quit or reduce tobacco use; in fact, nearly seven out of ten smokers report wanting to quit. However, fewer than one in ten successfully quit each year, highlighting the significant gap between motivation and long-term cessation success. [3]

This highlights the critical role medical providers play; even just three minutes of counseling has been shown to double a patient's chance of quitting, compared to simple advising.[4]

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a patient-centered approach that strengthens an

individual's own motivation and commitment to positive behavior changes, effectively opening the conversation for resources and support.

Providers can use the "5 A's", an evidence-based strategy for quitting: [4]

Ask	Advise	Assess	Assist	Arrange
Ask about and document tobacco use status at EVERY visit.	Advise in a clear, direct, personalized manner that tobacco users stop smoking.	Assess willingness to quit currently. For former tobacco users, ask how recently they stopped and what challenges they may still have trouble dealing with.	Assist by prescribing Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) unless medically contraindicated.	Arrange follow up, including counseling.

The "5 R's" are for Patients Not Yet Ready to Quit. For those patients who are not yet ready to commit to quitting, use the "5 R's" to help build motivation: [4]

Relevance	Risks	Rewards	Roadblocks	Repetition
Digging deeper to find out why the patient does not want to quit and why quitting is relevant to them. (Motivational interviewing tactics would come in handy here!)	Remind the patient what the ongoing risks of continued tobacco use have the potential to do to their body.	Willingness to quit currently. For former tobacco users, ask how recently they stopped and what challenges they may still have trouble dealing with.	Identify common challenges that most quitters go through, such as withdrawal symptoms, weight gain, relapses, etc.	Continue to ask about their willingness to quit, ideally at every single visit.

Talking Points

Topic	Talking Points
Secondhand Smoke	There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Even brief exposure can cause serious health problems. Secondhand smoke can cause coronary heart disease, stroke, and lung cancer in adults who do not smoke. Infants and young children are especially impacted by health problems caused by secondhand smoke because their bodies are still growing. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for: • Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)

Topic	Talking Points
	• Acute respiratory infections, such as pneumonia and bronchitis • Middle ear disease • More frequent and severe asthma • Respiratory symptoms and slowed lung growth [5]
E-Cigarettes and Vapes	The health risks of vaping include: • Addiction: E-cigarettes contain nicotine, a drug that's highly addictive. You don't have to vape every day to get addicted. • Anxiety and depression: Nicotine can make anxiety and depression worse. It also affects memory, concentration, self-control, and attention, especially in developing brains. • Becoming a smoker: People who vape are more likely to start smoking regular (tobacco) cigarettes and may be more likely to develop other addictions in the future. • Sleeping problems. • Exposure to cancer-causing chemicals. • Chronic bronchitis. • Lung damage can be life-threatening. • Other health effects are possible that are not yet identified. Vaping hasn't been around that long, so its health risks aren't all known.[6]
Cardiovascular	Smoking cessation is one of the most important actions people who smoke can take to reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease. This is true for all people who smoke, regardless of age or smoking duration and intensity. The health benefits of smoking cessation also extend to patients already diagnosed with heart disease. The cardiovascular benefits of smoking cessation include: • Reduces markers of inflammation and hypercoagulability. • Leads to rapid improvement in high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C) levels. • Reduces the development of subclinical atherosclerosis and slows progression as time since cessation lengthens. • Reduces the risk of disease and death from cardiovascular diseases (CVDs). • Reduces the risk of coronary heart disease, with risk falling sharply one to two years after cessation and then declining more slowly over the longer term. • Reduces the risk of disease and death from stroke, with risk approaching that of those who have never smoked after cessation. • Reduces the risk of abdominal aortic aneurysm, with risk decreasing with time since cessation. • May reduce the risk of atrial fibrillation, sudden cardiac death, heart failure, venous thromboembolism, and peripheral arterial disease.

Topic	Talking Points
Cardiovascular (cont.)	The Health Effects of Cigarettes: Cardiovascular Disease | Smoking and Tobacco Use | CDC provides additional information. [7]
Respiratory	Smoking cessation is one of the most important actions people who smoke can take to improve their health and reduce their risk for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). This is true for all people who smoke, regardless of age or smoking duration and intensity. The health benefits of smoking cessation also extend to people already diagnosed with COPD. The respiratory benefits of smoking cessation include: • Reduces the risk of developing COPD. • Slows the progression of COPD among people with this condition and reduces the loss of lung function over time. • Reduces the risk of cancer in the respiratory system. • Reduces respiratory symptoms such as cough, sputum production, and wheezing. • Reduces respiratory infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia. • Research suggests cessation may improve lung function, reduce symptoms, and improve treatment outcomes among people with asthma. [8]
Cancer	Smoking cessation is one of the most important actions people who smoke can take to improve their health and reduce their risk of cancer. This is true for all people who smoke, regardless of age, how much, or how long they have smoked. For patients with cancer, studies suggest that quitting smoking can significantly reduce mortality and improve their prognosis. Smoking cessation reduces the risk of 12 different types of cancer including lung, larynx, oral cavity and pharynx, esophagus, pancreas, bladder, stomach, colon and rectum, liver, cervix, kidney, and acute myeloid leukemia (AML). [9]
Maternal and Infant Care	Smoking cessation is one of the most important actions women who smoke can take care of a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby. The best time for women to quit smoking is before they try to get pregnant. But quitting at any time during pregnancy can benefit the health of both the mother and the baby. The reproductive health benefits of smoking cessation include: • Smoking cessation during pregnancy reduces the effects of smoking on fetal growth. Cessation early in pregnancy eliminates the adverse effects of smoking on fetal growth. • Smoking cessation before or during early pregnancy reduces the risk for a small-for-gestational age of birth.

Topic	Talking Points
	• Research suggests that smoking cessation may reduce the risk of preterm delivery. [10]
Adolescents	Vaping or using tobacco can have a negative impact on the ability to breathe and can impact athletic performance. Additionally, vaping or the use of tobacco can impact brain development. In addition to the above health impacts, vaping or using tobacco can also have more cosmetic effects, such as stained teeth, bad breath, yellow skin of the fingers, and premature wrinkling. Addressing peer pressure-having friends who use tobacco doubles the risk that youth will start using some form of tobacco product themselves. [6]

Treatment Options and Resources to Support Tobacco Recovery

Utilizing drug therapy significantly increases the likelihood of successful tobacco cessation, with smokers being twice as likely to quit successfully. [4] Quitting tobacco and nicotine products is challenging, but medications and other therapies can substantially improve success rates. These tools, such as Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) or prescription medications, effectively manage withdrawal symptoms like cravings and irritability. By reducing physical nicotine dependence, these aids empower individuals to focus on the psychological and emotional aspects of quitting, fostering a healthier, smoke-free life.

Below is an overview of available replacement therapies, including important considerations for their use.

Nicotine Replacement Therapies

Product	Cautions and Warnings	Possible Side Effects	Dosage
Gum / Lozenge	-Caution with dentures -Do not eat or drink 15 minutes before or during use.	• Dyspepsia • Nausea • Mouth irritation	**Weeks 1-6:** Q 1-2 hours or at least 9 pieces/day **Weeks 7-9:** Q 2-4 hours. **Weeks 10-12:** Every 4-8 hours

Product	Cautions and Warnings	Possible Side Effects	Dosage
			Recommended duration: Up to 6 months.
Patch	-Do not use over psoriasis or eczema.	• Insomnia • Local skin irritation	**If ≤ 10 cigarettes/day:** • 14 mg/day for 6 weeks. • 7 mg/day for 2 weeks. • Can continue 7 mg/day if urge continues. **If > 10 cigarettes/day:** • 21 mg/day for 6 weeks. • 14 mg/day for 2 weeks. • 7 mg/day for 2+ weeks. **Recommended duration:** 8 or 12 weeks. FDA approved for 3-5 months.
Varenicline *(Chantix)*	Use caution with the following: -Psychiatric disorders -Cardiovascular disease - Seizure disorders -Severe renal impairment *(CrCl < 30 mL/min)*	- Nausea - Insomnia or dreams - Headache - Depressed mood - Agitation or behavioral changes - Suicide ideation	**Days 1-3:** 0.5 mg/day. **Days 4-7:** 10.5 mg twice a day. **Days 8 through end:** 1 mg twice daily. **Recommended duration:** Chantix (R) can be used for 12 weeks. For patients that successfully stopped during first 12 weeks, another 12 weeks of treatment is recommended.
Bupropion SR *(Zyban, Wellbutrin SR)*	Contraindicated in those with seizure disorders, anorexia, or bulimia.	- Nausea - Insomnia or dreams	Start 1-2 weeks prior to quitting: 150 mg QAM x 3 days. Then: 150 mg BID; doses should be at least 8 hours

Product	Cautions and Warnings	Possible Side Effects	Dosage
Bupropion SR *(cont.)*	Can be used in combination with tobacco cessation products containing nicotine.	- Headache - Depressed mood - Agitation or behavioral changes - Suicide ideation	apart. Not to exceed 300 mg daily. Continue for 7-12 weeks. Recommended duration: Up to 6 months post-quit to maintain cessation.

To find the Highmark coverage for these products, please refer to the following resources.

For Highmark Health Options DE Medicaid Members:

- DE Medicaid Formulary Changes
- Therapeutic Drug Class

For Highmark Health Options DE Medicare D-SNP Members:

- Formulary Search
- 2026 Medicare 1 Tier Formulary

Tobacco Cessation Counseling

- Providers are encouraged to submit CPT codes for tobacco counseling sessions; sessions are limited to 4 counseling sessions per quit attempt, with a maximum of 2 quit attempts per year (total of up to 8 intermediate or intensive counseling sessions in a 12-month period).
    - **99406:** Smoking and tobacco use cessation counseling; intermediate, greater than 3 minutes, but not more than 10 minutes
    - **99407:** Smoking and tobacco use cessation counseling; intensive, greater than 10 minutes

This service can be billed on the same day as evaluation and management services if the evaluation and management service is significant and separately identifiable from the tobacco cessation counseling. The evaluation and management service must be billed with the appropriate modifier to indicate the additional service.

Referring Members to the DE Free Quit Tobacco Program

The DE Free Quitline is a complimentary state-sponsored program designed to assist individuals in their tobacco cessation journey. It helps participants prepare a quit plan, understand tobacco triggers, manage cravings, and provide comprehensive support. The Quitline facilitates phone-based counseling services tailored to the patient's convenience, offering support before, during, and after their quit date, all at no cost. Counselors can discuss various quitting therapies, strategies for overcoming challenges, and methods for staying on track.

Providers can visit the Quit Tobacco - Get the Support You Need | Healthy Delaware for detailed information on referring patients.

There are two primary referral methods:

- Provider Referral: When providers submit a referral, the Quitline will communicate the patient's progress back to you. This enables you to track their adherence to goals, NRT therapy, and engagement with their counselor, which can significantly enhance future patient visits.

- Self-Referral: Patients can also refer themselves directly online or by calling 1-866-409-1858. The website offers extensive tobacco cessation information, self-help tools, and a self-referral form.

Patients can also refer themselves on the website, they can find tobacco cessation information, self-help tools, and a referral form here: Rally Coach - Program Check

The DE Free Quitline also offers specialized programs:

- *Vaping Info and How to Talk to Your Kids | Healthy Delaware*
    - *Text VAPEFREE to 873873 for real-time coaching.*

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