

Pharmacists help smokers quit

Submitted by: Yes Consultancy

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Vantage Pharmacies support No Smoking Day

Vantage Pharmacies across the country are giving their support to the No Smoking Day initiative taking place on Wednesday 09 March 2005, set up to help people who want to stop smoking by creating a supportive environment.

Any smokers looking for support and advice to help them quit should look no further than pharmacies which run a Vantage Health Watch Smoking Cessation scheme that has had considerable success with dozens of patients who have realised that it is easier to give up with the help and support of medical experts.

The day gets bigger every year with an expected 4 million people up and down the country ready to take a positive step towards stopping smoking. One in three smokers (31%) takes part in No Smoking Day making it one of the biggest health events in the calendar.

As well as selling a wide range of nicotine replacement therapies – including gum, patches and inhalers - the pharmacy offers consultations to patients that provide opportunities to gauge their progress and keep them motivated. There is an initial consultation where a series of questions are asked, followed by regular meetings when the patient is 'stabilised'. The pharmacists are also trained to check a patient's medication and medical history to make sure that the therapies are appropriate.

The benefits of stopping start almost immediately. After just 20 minutes blood pressure returns to normal and after just 24 hours the lungs start to clear out the build up of tar. 48 hours later nicotine will have almost cleared out of the body. After a few weeks exercise will be easier and after five years the risk of a heart attack is halved. In those same five years a 20-a-day smoker will have saved around £9,000.

Pharmacies have a private consultation area or room so you can talk with the pharmacist discreetly. The pharmacies provide a friendly haven for patients who – quite understandably - might be finding it very hard to quit and want to pop in to see a friendly face."

Many pharmacies have a carbon monoxide monitor that measures the presence of the gas in a patients' breath, so they can literally measure the health benefits of giving up smoking over time which is really encouraging for many patients.

Vantage pharmacies have these top tips to assist smokers:

- Name the day when you are going to stop. Use the days between then and now to plan.
- Ask your Vantage pharmacist or doctor if any of the proven drug treatments could suit you.
- Tell your friends and family you want to stop smoking – get their help too.
- Put money saved by not smoking in a pot and see the savings grow. (One Vantage patient saved enough to travel to see her sister in Italy who she hadn't seen in 30 years!)
- If stopping smoking makes you fidgety, make sure you have some elastic bands or a squashy stress ball

to play with to occupy your hands.

- If you miss the comfort of a cigarette in the mouth, think about chewing regular gum that can take away the urge to smoke.
- Know your weak spots and change habits to cure the urge to smoke. For example, if you used to have a cigarette with a coffee, change to a cold drink to break the habit.
- Keep a helpline number handy, and keep asking questions!

- Ends -

For details of your nearest pharmacy offering Vantage Health Watch services please contact please contact Andrew Potter on 020 7569 3044 (email: andrew@yesconsultancy.com) or Tina Fotherby on 020 7569 3042 (email: tina@yesconsultancy.com) at The YES Consultancy.

There are hundreds of Vantage pharmacies offering Vantage Health Watch all over the country, found in small villages to major cities. For details of your local Vantage pharmacy please call Andrew on 020 7569 3044.