

MILLIONS OF NEW YEAR QUIT ATTEMPTS DOOMED TO GO UP IN SMOKE

Submitted by: Pegasus Public Relations (Worthing)

Tuesday, 10 January 2012

Two thirds of UK smokers (<http://www.quitwithhelp.co.uk>), the equivalent of six million people, will try and quit in January¹ but half will have failed within just one week, according to new research among 6,300 current or former smokers¹. In addition, one in ten quit attempts will last less than 24 hours¹.

On average, smokers admit to having unsuccessfully attempted to quit three times before¹, with one in five (19 per cent) having tried five times or more¹. Despite this, half (51 per cent) feel confident they will quit smoking within the next six months¹.

The most popular method to quit smoking is going 'cold turkey' - trying to give up immediately using willpower alone (45 per cent)¹. However, research suggests this is the least effective method with only three per cent remaining smoke-free after one year². A quarter chose this approach because they just want to get on with it, while 16 per cent misguidedly think it's the most credible way to quit smoking¹.

The research, commissioned by Pfizer Limited to launch its Don't Go Cold Turkey disease awareness campaign, revealed that one in five (21 per cent) have opted to cut back on the amount of cigarettes they smoke in a bid to combat their addiction¹. In addition, eight per cent have tried hypnosis and five per cent have had a go at meditation¹.

Revealing the extent of nicotine addiction amongst many smokers, 41 per cent admitted to stealing a cigarette from a friend or work colleague in desperation¹, while a quarter (26 per cent) have smoked the remains of a previously discarded cigarette butt because they had run out¹. Furthermore, one in five (19 per cent) have picked apart a broken or half-finished cigarette to fashion a new one and six per cent even confessed to raiding their child's piggy bank to buy more cigarettes¹. Perhaps not surprisingly, 46 per cent believe quitting smoking is one of the hardest things you can ever do¹.

However, only one in ten (11 per cent) have taken time before starting a quit attempt to consider their options for support and what would work best for them¹. Nearly half (47 per cent) have failed to make use of support from friends and family by keeping quit attempts a secret, due to worries about failing and concern they will be tempted to smoke by others¹. Furthermore, just one in five (19 per cent) have sought advice from a healthcare professional or the NHS stop smoking service¹, despite research showing this can increase the chances of success by up to four times compared to going it alone³.

Dr Sarah Jarvis, BBC medical correspondent and practising GP, says: "Many smokers are unaware of the help and support available from their healthcare professional. As a GP, I'm aware that people often fail to quit because they don't take the right approach. I want those who are motivated to give up smoking to consider that even a brief conversation with their healthcare professional or local stop smoking service can increase their chances of success by up to four times, compared to going 'cold turkey'. People should consider how they can positively influence their chances of quitting (<http://www.quitwithhelp.co.uk>)."

One in six (17 per cent) have not sought help from a healthcare professional because of worry about wasting their time, while 22 per cent admit it is not something they have ever considered¹. Of the former smokers, 23 per cent recommend those who want to quit seek advice from a doctor or healthcare professional¹ while 39 per cent would encourage a planned and well prepared approach to increase chances of success¹.

In an attempt to quit, 17 per cent of current smokers have avoided friends who smoke to reduce temptation, 12 per cent have chain-smoked their way through their remaining cigarettes to the point of feeling sick and one in six have even taken up a new hobby to distract them¹.

Popular excuses that smokers have given are that they need cigarettes to relax (38 per cent), that they will cut back to a safe level (one in six) and that smoking makes them a happier person (16 per cent). Furthermore, 12 per cent believe the resulting weight gain from quitting is healthier than the cigarettes themselves while one in ten say they have smoked for so long that the damage has already been done¹.

The Don't Go Cold Turkey campaign aims to ensure smokers who want to quit are aware of the options available to them and understand how taking the right approach can significantly increase the chances of successfully breaking the cycle of nicotine dependence. Visit www.quitwithhelp.co.uk for more information and advice on quitting smoking.

Ends

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