

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Free medications available to help Kansas smokers quit  
*1-800-QUIT-NOW promotion runs April 17-21***

**TOPEKA, Kan.** – Smokers in Kansas can get free medications shipped directly to their home to help them quit from Monday, April 17, to Friday, April 21, or while supplies last. Medications made available by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) include nicotine lozenge, gum and nicotine patch. During this time period, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) Tips From Former Smokers national tobacco education campaign will encourage smokers to call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) for free help getting medication and quit assistance. In order to take advantage, tobacco users must enroll in the Kansas Tobacco Quitline with a trained coach and be medically eligible to receive the free medication.

“We want all tobacco users to know that although quitting is hard, they can do it,” said Matthew Schrock, KDHE Cessation Coordinator. “Smokers often try to quit several times before succeeding, but proven treatments and services are available that can improve your chances to quit for good. We encourage all Kansans to try to quit, and if they want free help, to take advantage of this opportunity.”

People who smoke cigarettes can and do quit. In fact, today there are more former smokers than current smokers in the United States. Surveys show that about 70 percent of all cigarette smokers want to quit, and research shows quitting completely at any age has health benefits that include the following:

- Lowers your risk for lung cancer and many other types of cancer.
- Reduces your risk for heart disease, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease (narrowing of the blood vessels outside your heart).
- Reduces your heart disease risk almost immediately.
- Reduces respiratory symptoms, such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.
- Reduces risk of developing lung diseases such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.
- Reduces risk for infertility in women of childbearing age. Women who stop smoking during pregnancy also reduce their risk of having a low birth weight baby.

Counseling, including quitline coaching, and medication, including nicotine lozenge, gum and patch, are effective in helping smokers quit, and using them together is more effective than using either one alone. Medications help smokers quit by decreasing urges to smoke and other withdrawal symptoms while quitting.

The most recent data shows that approximately 17.7 percent of Kansas adults smoke. Smoking is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States. Smoking kills 480,000 Americans each year, and millions more live with diseases caused by smoking.

Additional information on quitting is available at [ksquit.org](http://ksquit.org).

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*KDHE’s mission is to protect and improve the health and environment of all Kansans.*