

Health Awareness

Protecting Your Vision From Diabetes

(NAPSA)—Diabetes kills more Americans each year than AIDS and breast cancer combined—and can cause serious problems throughout the body. According to the National Eye Institute, eye health, for example, can become critically compromised.

Around 30.3 million Americans, or 9.4 percent of the population, are living with diabetes, with about 1.5 million more being diagnosed every year. The longer someone has diabetes, the greater his or her chances are of developing diabetic retinopathy, or damage to the blood vessels in the retina. According to the National Eye Institute, between 40 and 45 percent of people diagnosed with diabetes have some degree of diabetic retinopathy.

While being overweight and leading a sedentary lifestyle are certainly linked to diabetes, social and environmental factors such as poverty, stress, and lack of safe housing and access to a healthy diet can also compromise your health and ultimately contribute to the development of type 2 diabetes. According to America's Health Insurance Plans, addressing these social determinants of health has become a top priority for Medicaid

programs.

"We encourage our members with diabetes to have regular eye exams to rule out complications," said Dr. Andrea Gelzer, senior vice president of medical affairs at AmeriHealth Caritas, a national leader in Medicaid managed care and other health care solutions for those most in need. "We educate our members so they understand that living a healthy lifestyle, controlling their blood sugar and having regular eye exams can help save their vision."

Simple steps can help mitigate the effects of diabetes and may potentially delay complications from diabetic eye disease, including controlling your blood sugar and blood pressure, monitoring your cholesterol, seeing your doctor regularly, and having a dilated eye exam at least once per year—or more if recommended by your eye care professional.

AmeriHealth Caritas is part of the Independence Health Group in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and one of the nation's leaders in health care solutions for those most in need.

Learn More

For further information, visit www.amerhealthcaritas.com.

Health And Well-Being

Minnesotans: Quitting Tobacco Is Hard. Here's Help.

(NAPSA)—When it comes to the people of Minnesota protecting their health from tobacco, there's good news, bad news and better news.

The good news is, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly seven out of 10 smokers want to quit. In fact, quitting smoking is one of the most popular New Year's resolutions, and overall, cigarette smoking is down in the state.

The bad news is about 580,000 Minnesotans still smoke. And smokers who try to quit "cold turkey" are only successful about 5 percent of the time.

The better news is a little planning and support can greatly increase your odds of success. When you decide to quit smoking, QUITPLAN Services can help. For nearly 20 years, it has provided free support to all Minnesotans who want to quit smoking, with a menu of options including free patches, gum or lozenges; e-mail and text support; quit guides; and free phone coaching. More than 175,000 people have used the service so far. To make quitting easier for you, QUITPLAN Services has come up with these four tips:

Quitting Tips

1. Make a plan and stick to it. Set a quit date. Use a quit medication, such as gum, patches or lozenges, to reduce symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. People who make a plan succeed more often than those who don't.

2. Stay active. Making physical



Quitting tobacco isn't easy but with help and your own determination, you can do it.

activity a daily habit can help you fight cravings, avoid setbacks and feel better in general. It works because exercise stimulates the brain in positive ways—boosting mood, improving concentration and relieving stress. All of these benefits help conquer urges and give you more confidence to remain tobacco-free. Even walking briskly for five to 10 minutes can decrease cravings. Exercising with others provides support and helps keep your mind off tobacco.

Start exercising during your quit so you can use physical activity as a way to conquer withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Then, become even more active after you quit to keep up your confidence.

Select an activity that you enjoy so you'll be more likely to keep at it. Consider walking, bicycling, hiking, jogging, water exercise, tennis, basketball or soccer.

3. Ask for help. There are support systems all around; don't be afraid to use them. People who seek support from others are more likely to succeed.

Whether it's a family member, a friend, a co-worker or a professional phone coach, most people are more than willing to help you stay strong against tobacco.

4. Surround yourself with a tobacco-free environment. Rid your home, car and work area of all tobacco-related items (lighters and ashtrays, as well as the tobacco products themselves). Soak tobacco products in water so you cannot use them. Check for any "forgotten" cigarettes or tobacco in old jackets, purses, tackle boxes, desk drawers or glove compartments. Wash any bedding, pillows and clothes that smell like tobacco. If you can, have your carpets, furniture, drapes and car interior cleaned professionally to get rid of the tobacco smell. Clear your head of tobacco as much as possible. Start thinking like a nonsmoker and get enthusiastic about quitting.

Quitting is hard, but with your determination and any support you want from QUITPLAN Services—texts, e-mails, quit guides, phone coaching, free nicotine patches, gum or lozenges—you can do it.

Learn More

For more facts and tips and to access free help, go to www.quitplan.com.



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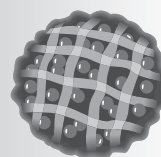
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LINDA OCCHI found the National Cherry Pie Day Graphic on Page 5B (bottom right corner of Planning Your Retirement picture). She won a gift certificate towards Siuslaw News Subscription.



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