

# UPDATE

TIME TO QUIT

## EVERY 11 MINUTES

**EVERY 11 MINUTES, A CANADIAN DIES FROM TOBACCO USE.** Every 10 minutes, two Canadian teenagers start smoking cigarettes; one of them will lose her life because of it. Yearly, more than a thousand Canadians who never even smoked die — from exposure to tobacco smoke. Thousands more are diagnosed with illnesses related to tobacco use. Year in and year out, more than 45,000 Canadians perish — because of tobacco.

*It doesn't have to be that way. Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of premature death and disease in Canada.*

In April of 2001, the Government of Canada stepped up its efforts to ensure that Canada ultimately will be smoke-free — with the launch of the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy. This Strategy, representing the most significant effort Canada has ever undertaken to fight the tobacco epidemic, brings a comprehensive, integrated and sustained approach to tobacco control.

These communiqués detail some of the initiatives connected to the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy.

## initiatives

### Time to Quit

Quitting smoking represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the quality and length of their lives. There is no question that smokers can quit — more than 7 million Canadians (over half of Canadians who have ever smoked) have done so. There are now more former smokers in Canada than there are smokers.

Moreover, whenever one person quits smoking, many others benefit. Workplace productivity can increase; insurance and maintenance costs can be reduced. And evidence shows that as the number of people who quit increases, the number of people who start decreases (partly because there are fewer models for smoking behaviour). Plus, a smaller number of smokers is commensurate with less second-hand smoke.

An essential component of the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy is the earliest possible delivery of the most effective cessation programming, in order to ward off disease, disability and premature death. Health Canada has taken several steps to enable this.

#### On Paper

The *Y2Quit Newsletter* is the result of a collaboration between Family Physicians of Canada, the Canadian Council for Tobacco Control, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, and Health Canada. The role of physicians in helping Canadians to stop smoking is the newsletter's focus; it provides up-to-date tobacco control news and information to health professionals and to their patients across Canada.

- Newsletters
- Quitlines
- Websites
- Mass Media

## On The Telephone

Recently, Health Canada oversaw the development of a National Network of Quitlines — a framework for sharing resources, identifying research and training needs and providing cost-efficient cessation counselling across Canada. Health Canada is now providing funding for training, resources and information dissemination, as well as the establishment of a national standardized approach to quitline monitoring and evaluation.

Health Canada has also partnered with all ten provinces, as well as with the Canadian Cancer Society, the Canadian Lung Association, the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada and others, to pilot and evaluate a web-based national network of '1-800' quitlines (developed by the Canadian Cancer Society and the University of Waterloo). These quitlines enable common utilization of research and resources, as well as standardized delivery of training and intervention services. This enhanced access to effective, cost-efficient and evidence-based tobacco cessation counselling is showing promise; early evaluations indicate six month abstinence rates of between 12.2% and 13.7%.

## On The Web

Forty-five percent of visitors to Health Canada's [www.GoSmokefree.ca](http://www.GoSmokefree.ca) website access cessation information, tapping into a variety of online smoking cessation tools. In addition to exploring an inventory of Canadian tobacco cessation programmes and resources, visitors can now access *On the Road to Quitting* — an interactive self-help web-based programme (also available as a print brochure — *Guide to Becoming a Non-smoker*). *On the Road to Quitting* is designed to help motivate smokers to quit, and to support them as they undergo the cessation process — from the pre-contemplation stage right through to post-quit. It sets out to build confidence; it provides tips for dealing with temptations, stress, withdrawal symptoms and relapse; and it answers questions about nicotine replacement therapies and other stop-smoking strategies.

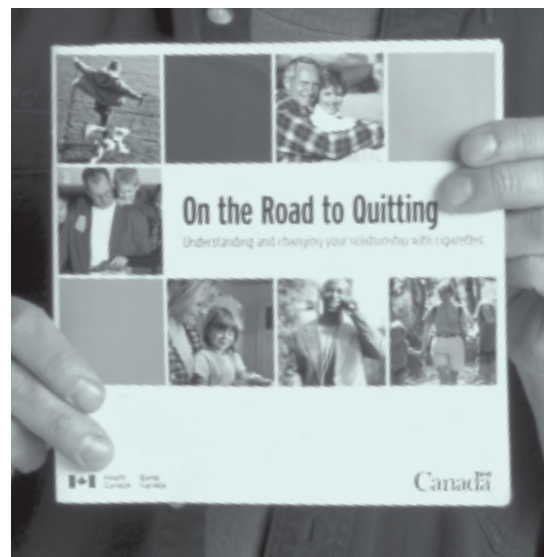
Smokers may also sign up for *e-Quit*. By filling out a questionnaire which can help them to understand their smoking habits, learn why they smoke, and discover why they may want to quit, smokers can choose to receive an eight-week series of free e-mail messages which will help them through the cessation process.

## On TV

Over the course of 2003 Health Canada conducted television advertising campaigns directed at motivating Canadian smokers to quit. Consisting of a series of ads featuring 'Bob' and 'Martin' (fictional 'average Canadian' characters who over an extended period of time engaged the audience in a journey through the process of quitting), this mass media initiative prompted Canadians to take action by visiting the Health Canada website, calling 1-800-O-Canada, or calling quitline services in their communities.

The aim of the campaign was to be supportive and to leave smokers feeling empowered regarding their ability to quit; evidence indicates that this was achieved. During the first four weeks of the campaign, calls to 1-800-O-Canada increased tenfold, web site traffic on [www.GoSmokefree.ca](http://www.GoSmokefree.ca) increased by a measure of 175%, and nearly 14,000 smokers filled in personal profiles for quitting on the site. Between May and October, as the campaign unfolded, volume on the web site increased to 56,000 visits per month, more than 63,000 documents were downloaded from the site, and more than 40,000 personal profiles for *On the Road to Quitting* were created.

The cessation campaign is not over. Canadian audiences will have the opportunity to continue the journey with Bob and Martin on television again. Health Canada is committed to extending smoking cessation programming and resources to Canadians for the long term.







# Messages sent to Health Canada at www.GoSmokefree.ca

*I signed up over a year and a half ago, my quit date was March 25th, 2003. I found e-quit to be most helpful. I had tried several times in the past with no success. This time it worked and I know I will never be a smoker again. I feel like I have my life back. At 43, I decided I wanted to be around for my grandchildren and great grandchildren, I wanted to spend my old age with my husband, I didn't want to die because of a stupid filthy deadly habit. I never thought I could do this, nobody believed me but I proved them all wrong. I realized that there will always be stresses and stressors in my life but a cigarette will never solve a problem ... rather it creates more. Smoking was an emotional crutch that crippled me. I love being smoke free and am so thankful that this program exists and I recommend it to everyone who asks. So thank you from the bottom of my lungs!*

*Well, I'm 13 years old and I have some guy friends that think smoking is cool. All my girl-friends agree with me when I say smoking is NOT cool. Meanwhile, some of my OTHER guy friends think it is gross and wrong. After reading your web page, it made me happy to know that there are more people out there that feel the same way as I do. I've confronted my guy friends about smoking and some of the not-so-good results and am happy to say that a few say they are quitting. Let's hope they follow through with it. Thanks for displaying your web page. Bye.*

*I celebrated my six month anniversary of not smoking on November 13th. I logged onto your site last March/April, read all the information available and requested a copy of your smoking cessation book, which I received. Thank you! The ... patch (step 1) helped me for ten days, and then I stopped that too. Having succeeded (after smoking for 31 years!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!), I do believe that one has to be ready, one must have a plan. (Bob on your TV commercials helped out ... drink water, go for a walk, deep breath of fresh air ... I think he should get a raise!) I never thought I could. ... I DID! ... Cool, huh? ... Thank you for having your site on the Internet!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

*I would like ... to say a HUGE 'thank you' for sending me your 'e-Quit' e-mails and the "On The Road to Quitting" programme on your website. My quit date was back on January 19th, and I have been SMOKE-FREE since then!! As my husband says "I'm craving but NOT caving." ... Your e-mails have been a great help before, during and even after quitting. They helped me set my quit date, kept me learning all about my triggers and feelings, and talked me through to becoming a non-smoker. ... One week, two days, 19 hours, 5 minutes and 58 seconds. 137 cigarettes not smoked, saving \$42.51. Life saved: 11 hours, 25 minutes. Thank you all so much again!!!!*