Tobacco use is the single leading cause of preventable illness and death in the United States. Each year, more than 430,000 Americans die prematurely from smoking-related diseases. Today, nearly a quarter of U.S. adults and about a third of U.S. youth continue to smoke. In addition, smoking rates among young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 years have increased in recent years. The increases may be attributed to the aging of high school students whose smoking rates were high during the 1990s or they may be an indication of increased initiation of smoking among young adults. Disparities in smoking also exist among people of different educational levels and racial and ethnic groups. Smoking prevalence is highest among persons with lower educational attainment (9-11 years) and among American Indians/Alaskan Natives. If current patterns persist, nearly 25 million U.S. citizens will die prematurely from a smoking-related disease.

Smoking trends in the past nine years have stagnated, demonstrating the need for policy changes that encourage quitting and improved access to proven cessation interventions. In 2004, over 45.5 million non-institutionalized adults aged 18 and older in the United States reported smoking every day or some days (20.8%), including 23.5 million men (23.0%) and 22 million women (19.0%). During 2004, over 1.4 million (22.5%) adult smokers lived in North Carolina.

WHO'S STILL SMOKING IN N.C.?

THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT:

The American Cancer Society (ACS) hosts the 29th annual Great American Smokeout on Thursday, November 17, 2005 to help smokers quit tobacco use for at least 24 hours, with the hope that smokers will then be able to quit completely. Smokers should use the Great American Smokeout as a call to action to see their physicians and use the effective treatments available to help them convert their quit attempt into successful long-term cessation. For the Great American Smokeout, ACS staff and volunteers provide smoking cessation and smoking prevention activities for people of all ages at the local ACS offices. Additional information is available from ACS: 800-227-2345 or www.cancer.org
Similar to the overall U.S. prevalence, the smoking prevalence among men (25.3%) was somewhat higher than among women (19.9%) in North Carolina. Smoking levels did not vary substantially among age groups in North Carolina, except for a decrease in smoking levels for those who were 65 years or older. Whites (22.7%) were as likely to smoke as blacks (22.8%) and Hispanics (18.4%) in North Carolina. The smoking prevalence of ‘other’ (20.6%) and Hispanics should be interpreted with caution and needs further investigation as it was based on a small sample size. Smoking was greatest among adults ages 18-24 (28.2%).

Research has shown that smoking cessation has major and immediate benefits for smokers of all ages. After one year of quitting cigarettes, the excess risk of heart disease caused by smoking is reduced by about one-half. After ten years, the risk of lung disease for former smokers is less than one-half that of a continuing smoker. In five to 15 years, the risk of stroke for former smokers returns to the level of those who have never smoked.

Several methods are available that can help smokers quit. Less intensive interventions, such as physicians advising their patients to quit smoking, can produce cessation rates of 5% to 10% per year. More intensive interventions that combine both behavioral counseling and pharmacological treatment can produce 20% to 25% quit rates in one year.

Nationally in 2004, 53.7% of smokers quit smoking for a day or longer, for a total of roughly 24.5 million Americans. In North Carolina, few differences were found between genders or race/ethnicity. However, persons 18-24 were most likely to quit for a day or more compared to their counterparts nationally. Due to limited sample sizes of smokers in North Carolina it would be misleading to represent any data on quitting rates of smokers by race/ethnicity.
Also available will be a fax referral system whereby health care providers or others working with tobacco users will determine if the tobacco user wants to make a quit attempt within 30 days, then get consent for the quitline to make the initial call. This way the tobacco user need not make the first call - the quitline will call them to initiate the cessation process.

This evidence-based service will be an effective resource to help North Carolinians of all ages quit the use of tobacco.

For more information on tobacco use prevention and control, please visit the CDC Office on Smoking and Health’s Tobacco Information and Prevention Source page at www.cdc.gov/tobacco

References:


For more information, please contact:
Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch
Surveillance & Evaluation Team
1932 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, North Carolina 27699-1932
(919) 707-5412
www.communityhealth.dhhs.state.nc.us/tobacco.htm