

Smoking bans motivate even reluctant women to quit

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Many workplaces and households ban smoking and, for some women, the effects extend beyond their office building or family home. A new study finds that women smokers who live and work where bans are enforced, even those who did not make explicit plans to quit, are more likely to attempt quitting.

The difference is the “spur-of-the-moment” factor. Most people who want to quit smoking make a plan. They choose a day they will stop and

they might stock up on nicotine gum or chewing gum or throw out all their ashtrays, for example. They might also keep telling themselves that they intend to quit someday. Even if they never act on that intention, it is there.

In other cases, the person decides to stop smoking without having planned or consciously created an intention to quit in advance

The new study uses data from a national survey of 7,610 [women](#) who work outside the home, 81 percent of whom said they smoked daily.

Twenty percent of women with home and work smoking bans said they intended to quit smoking, compared with 14 percent of those with work bans only, 20 percent with home bans only and 14 percent with smoking bans in neither place.

Yet, even women who said they had no intentions of quitting still made spontaneous attempts to quit, the study found, and a home ban appeared to have a slightly larger effect than a work ban. Thirty-four percent of women who had no prior intention of quitting but who had a ban only at home said they had attempted to quit, compared with 33 percent with bans at home and work and 25 percent with no bans.

“This is good news because smoke-free policies in the home may have an effect on increasing quit attempts regardless of motivation to quit,” said Allison Rose, lead study author, who works with SAIC-Frederick as a contractor to the National Cancer Institute. The study appears in the September-October issue of the *American Journal of Health Promotion*.

Only 29 percent of women surveyed reported that their home and [workplaces](#) banned smoking completely, but this varied with socioeconomic factors. Smoking bans were in both places for 17 percent of women with less than a high school education, 21 percent of those

making less than \$25,000 a year and 17 percent of African-American women.

The main goal of smoking bans is to keep people from harm from secondhand smoke, said Bill Blatt, director of tobacco programs at the American Lung Association. Getting smokers to stop smoking is an added benefit of the bans, he added.

It is not surprising that home bans are associated with more quit attempts because both are personal or family decisions, compared to workplace bans that an employee might have no control over, Blatt said. Someone who creates a home smoking ban usually is going to follow through on it, he said.

“Yet, less than one-third of our population of working women smokers reported that they work and live in smoke-free environments,” Rose said. “This suggests we have a lot more work to do to make sure that all women have full protection from secondhand smoke at both work and home.”

More information: Rose A, et al. The role of worksite and home smoking bans in smoking cessation among U.S. employed adult female smokers. *Am J Health Promo* 26(1), 2011.

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