

Smokers prefer cold turkey

January 3 2012

(Medical Xpress) -- Cold turkey is the preferred method for giving up smoking according to public health researchers at the University of Sydney. With more than two-thirds of smokers giving up permanently this way, the research team wants to know why.

Led by Dr Sally Dunlop, a research specialist in the determinants of health-related behaviours, the team is launching a study that will investigate how and why [smokers](#) choose different methods for giving up.

Officially labelled 'unassisted cessation' the cold turkey method is the most common form of successful smoking cessation. According to Dr Dunlop this method has been understudied and unexploited as the major contributor to national cessation rates.

"Both prior to and since the advent of [nicotine replacement](#) and other pharmacological therapies, unassisted cessation has proved to be the approach which most smokers use to finally stop.

"We believe it is time to pay much closer attention to the potential role of the cold turkey method," says Dr Dunlop.

The study will concentrate on data from interviews with ex-smokers who have quit for a minimum of 12 months and a maximum of five years, with a focus on those with nearer to five years continuous abstinence.

"We also intend to study a smaller group who are attempting to quit

unassisted during the study period," states Dr Dunlop.

Co-researcher on the study, Simon Chapman, Professor in Public Health at the Sydney Medical School, says Australia has progressively introduced the world's most comprehensive population-focused [tobacco control program](#). The government target of getting smoking prevalence to ten percent by 2020 might be overly optimistic however unless we understand why unassisted methods of giving up are the most successful.

"If we can understand why this method appears to work for most ex-smokers we can create relevant and impactful future tobacco control policies and practice. We can also help create the relevant support mechanisms for persons wanting to give up cigarettes," he says.

Recent NSW data show that, of smokers and ex-smokers who made a recent quit attempt, 30 to 43 percent reported using quit smoking medications, less than 10 percent reported calling the Quitline, and less than five percent used [smoking cessation](#) clinics.

"Today's male lung cancer incidence rates were last seen in 1962, and female rates will never reach even half the peak rates once seen in men," say Professor Chapman.

But with just over 15 percent of people aged over 14 still [smoking](#) daily it's time to learn more about the way that most ex-smokers stopped.

Provided by University of Sydney

Citation: Smokers prefer cold turkey (2012, January 3) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-01-smokers-cold-turkey.html>

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