

Five minute saliva test to identify smokers rolled out to health schemes

January 3 2014

Smokers who need extra incentives to quit the cigarettes this new year should take note that even private health insurance premiums may be reduced if they can prove they have stopped for good – and with the aid of a pioneering test from the University of Birmingham, the proof can be easy to acquire.

January is one of the most common times to attempt to quit smoking – but NHS figures show that many people will fail in their first attempt.

But as well as the numerous health benefits of quitting, the economic benefits cannot be ignored, including saving the cost of the cigarettes and lower insurance premiums.

The Saliva SmokeScreen test is part of the PruHealth free Vitality Healthcheck programme to verify non-smoking in their policy holders, so they can qualify for its unique non-smoker cash back reward. The [saliva test](#), which was developed by Dr Graham Cope detects cotinine, a breakdown product of nicotine, is being used as part of a comprehensive health check carried out in pharmacies throughout the country. The Vitality Healthcheck also includes testing for cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure, and includes calculation of a Body Mass Index is being delivered by roadtohealth within Lloyds Pharmacies.

Dr Graham Cope, honorary senior research fellow at the University of Birmingham, said: "Smoking is an important risk factor for many chronic diseases, such as respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease and

diabetes. It also causes [blood pressure](#) to rise and is linked with [high cholesterol levels](#). We are pleased the SmokeScreen test has been chosen as the means to monitor smoking in this programme."

Provided by University of Birmingham

Citation: Five minute saliva test to identify smokers rolled out to health schemes (2014, January 3) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-01-minute-saliva-smokers-health-schemes.html>

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