

Anti-smoking campaign successful and cost-effective, CDC says

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CDC Photo

Ads featured advice from former smokers.

(HealthDay)—A national anti-smoking campaign featuring tips from former smokers was highly successful and cost-effective, a new study reports.

The 2012 Tips From Former Smokers campaign spent \$480 per smoker who quit and \$393 per year of life saved, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found.

"Our mission is to protect the public health, and the 2012 Tips ads did this by motivating 1.6 million smokers to make a quit attempt," study co-author Dr. Tim McAfee, director of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, said in an agency news release. "In addition, our responsibility is

to spend public dollars as wisely and efficiently as possible."

A widely accepted limit for the cost-effectiveness of a public health program is \$50,000 per year of life saved, according to the agency.

The CDC noted that the cost-effectiveness of anti-smoking campaigns can include expenses related to medications, counseling and other treatments to help people quit smoking. Even when those expenses are added to the cost of the Tips campaign, the total is still 15 times less than the \$50,000 cost-effectiveness threshold, the CDC said.

The findings were published Dec. 10 in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

"There is no question the Tips campaign is a 'best buy' for public health—it saves lives and saves money," CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden said in the news release.

"Smoking-related disease costs this nation more than \$289 billion a year. The Tips campaign is one of the most cost-effective of all health interventions. This study shows how much the Tips campaign accomplished by being on the air for just 12 weeks. We would expect the benefits to be even greater if Tips was on the air all year," Frieden added.

The \$48 million effort was the first federally funded national mass media anti-smoking campaign and led to about 100,000 smokers quitting permanently, according to the study authors.

The study also noted the campaign will save about 179,000 healthy life-years at a cost of \$268 per year of healthy life gained. The campaign will also help prevent about 17,000 premature deaths. The cost will be about \$2,200 per premature death averted, the study found.

"This is further proof the Tips campaign is a smart, effective and efficient use of taxpayer dollars," McAfee said.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States, killing almost half a million Americans every year, the CDC reported. And, most smokers—70 percent—want to quit, the study authors noted in the news release.

Cigarette smoking costs about \$170 billion a year in U.S. [health care expenses](#), other new research from the CDC has found. Almost two-thirds of those expenses are paid through public programs such as Medicare or Medicaid, the agency said.

Smokers can get free help for stopping smoking by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW.

More information: The American Cancer Society offers a [guide to quitting smoking](#).

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