

# Looking to quit smoking? A visit to the pharmacy could save your life

March 2 2020, by Olivia White, Erin Feeley, and Ashley Schenk

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Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),

cigarette smoking is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths each year in the United States.

The National Tobacco Control Programs in Action is a platform of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health (OSH), a nationwide investment that supports all 50 states efforts to protect kids and help smokers quit. It is through this program and other partners, like Kentucky's Board of Pharmacy, that Kentucky has increased access to cessation medications and counseling.

The statistics in Kentucky are staggering. Each year, more than 8,900 people die of smoking-related illnesses across the state and, according to the CDC, tobacco-related diseases among Kentuckians result in Medicaid and Medicare treatment costs of more than \$1.2 billion per year.

In 2018, a protocol was approved by the Kentucky Board of Pharmacy that allows pharmacists to dispense smoking cessation products and counsel patients who are looking to quit. The pharmacists involved receive training on protocol to effectively communicate with patients who want to quit and offer tips, like which products are best to help.

The Tobacco Cessation Therapy Protocol outlines the criteria and procedures required for pharmacists to initiate tobacco cessation therapies. They include follow-up monitoring and evaluation every four weeks. If continued [therapy](#) is warranted, medication refills may be authorized until the entire therapy is complete.

Under the protocol, pharmacists are able to dispense up to a 30-day supply of medication, including nicotine replacement therapies, like a patch, gum, inhaler or nasal spray.

There are criteria that enables someone to receive this therapy, including

relevant medical and [social history](#), patient preferences and consideration of other therapies the patient is currently receiving.

Bottom line, if you or a loved one is looking to quit smoking, a good first step is to visit your local [pharmacist](#) for more information.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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