

Study: New Year resolution is your best chance to quit smoking

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January is one of the best times to give up smoking, according to award-winning researchers who say New Year's resolutions can help you quit forever.

Data from UK studies into who gives up smoking, and how, indicate that people who quit in January are more likely to be successful than those who quit at other times of the year.

This is because New Year's resolutions can give an added boost to quitters' motivation, a critical element in whether or not people will be successful.

University of Stirling public health scientist Professor Linda Bauld says : "Studies over the last decade show that one of the single biggest factors in predicting whether someone will stop smoking is how motivated they are. A January deadline can give a bit of extra motivation."

A New Year resolution to quit smoking is particularly effective if combined with stop smoking medications and support, she emphasises.

According to Professor Bauld and her team - whose ground-breaking research was recognised with a prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2013 - a further incentive to successful quitting includes having a "buddy" who stops smoking with you.

"Social support is important. For example, one of the biggest determinants of whether a woman manages to stop during pregnancy is if her partner also stops," says Professor Bauld.

Only four per cent of smokers who try to give up by relying purely on will power are likely to succeed, according to the data.

Add in anti-smoking medication and behavioural support from the National Health Service, and smokers will be four times more likely to give up tobacco for good.

Many smokers are now using e-cigarettes to help quit tobacco, which contains harmful toxins, but the jury is still out on whether these nicotine delivery devices are hazardous to longer-term health.

Don't give up on quitting smoking if you have tried it before and failed, because the research shows that many people have successfully stopped after several dud attempts.

"The more often you try to stop, the more likely you are to be successful eventually," says the University of Stirling scientist.

The data also shows that if you started smoking early, as a child or teenager, you are likely to find it much more difficult to stop. This is because if you start smoking when your brain is still developing, the effects of being exposed to nicotine are particularly harmful.

"If we can delay someone becoming a smoker, that in itself is an achievement," says Professor Bauld.

The work of Professor Bauld and her colleagues at the University of Stirling has been instrumental in shaping policy changes that have seen the UK implement bans on tobacco advertising and smoking in public places over the past decade.

The university's researchers have also led work to help develop laws that restrict the display and promotion of tobacco in shops around the UK and ban cigarette sales to under-18s in Scotland.

One of the key sources of evidence for policy and public health recommendations is the Institute's Youth Tobacco Policy Survey, which has been carried out every two to three years since 1999 and is funded by Cancer Research UK.

It measures [smoking](#) attitudes before and after policies are introduced. At least 7,000 young people have participated in the survey.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of chronic disease and death in the UK.

Provided by University of Stirling

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