



Health Benefit Plans

tobacco
free

Second-hand smoke comes from the tip of a lit cigarette, pipe or cigar. It is also the smoke that a smoker exhales. It is what you see, smell and inhale when you're near a smoker.

Employers can use health benefit plans to ensure employees have easy access to tobacco cessation medication, products like nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), and counseling. Research shows that the most effective tobacco cessation program includes both medications and counseling, which in combination have been shown to double or triple a person's success rate at quitting.

“What is covered and available to employees needs to be clearly communicated.”

A Good Benefits Plan:

- Is available to all employees including part time or casual employees. If this is not possible, consider reimbursing employees for out of pocket expenses related to NRT, medications and counseling, at least for a limited time.
- Includes individual, group or telephone counseling from either an employee assistance program or Quitnow, a free telephone and online counseling program for BC residents.
- Provides information about the quitting process, etc.
- Includes access to prescription and over—the—counter products approved by Health Canada for the treatment of tobacco use dependence (including nicotine patches, nicotine gum, nicotine lozenges, nicotine inhaler, bupropion SR and varenicline).
- Provides counseling and pharmacotherapy for multiple episodes of treatment per benefit year with no lifetime limit. Relapse is part of the quitting process and often requires multiple quit attempts to achieve long—term abstinence from tobacco.
- Eliminates or minimizes employees' out-of-pocket treatment costs (such as deductibles, cost-sharing) for counseling and pharmacotherapy to remove financial barriers to treatment.

Questions to Ask Your Health Plan Provider:

- How does the health plan identify and document tobacco users and tobacco cessation interventions?
- Provide a list of all covered tobacco cessation drugs. How frequently are these offered and for what period annually? Are multiple quit attempts covered in one 12-month period?



- Describe the plan for tobacco cessation. Is it co-payment?
- Are over the counter medications covered?
- Who is covered by the benefit plan, all employees?
- How is the plan promoted to employees?

When Tobacco Cessation Products and Counseling Services Are Not Part of Your Company Health Benefits Package

If company benefits for smoking cessation products are not available, let employees know about the [BC Smoking Cessation Program](#). This Program helps British Columbians stop smoking by assisting them with the cost of medications such as prescription smoking cessation drugs or nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) products like nicotine gum or patches.

If counseling services are not available, inform employees about [QuitNow](#) which offers a variety of counselling services by phone, online and via text messaging. [QuitNow](#) is a FREE smoking cessation helpline available around the clock for all residents of BC. Trained Care Coaches will help you develop a quit plan, deal with cravings, and provide on-going support throughout your quit. QuitNow provides translation services in 130 languages, as well as TTY service for the deaf and hearing impaired.

