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Office of Public Affairs

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Is smoking taxing your wallet as well as your health?

RALEIGH – In these troubled economic times, people are searching for ways to reduce expenses. One way to save money and improve health is to call the free North Carolina Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) and make an individualized plan to quit smoking.

“Quitting smoking or tobacco use is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health,” said Dr Marcus Plescia, chief of the Chronic Disease and Injury Section of the N.C. Division of Public Health. “Combining help from the quitline with tobacco cessation medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration can double your chances of successfully quitting. And many health plans, including Medicaid and the State Health Plan, offer assistance with tobacco cessation medications.”

Smokers have increased health care costs that can be reduced when they quit. With the economy the way it is, quitting tobacco can also improve the health of a person’s wallet. According to *Forbes Magazine*, the average price of cigarettes in North Carolina in 2008 was about \$3.80 per pack, so smoking a pack a day cost about \$114 a month or more than \$1,368 over the year. In 2009, prices are expected to increase in coming weeks and months on cigarettes, cigars, little cigars, pipe tobacco and loose tobacco.

Tobacco use is addictive, and it can be tough to quit. Telephone quitlines not only are effective in helping tobacco users quit, they are also cost-effective. The N.C Tobacco Use Quitline is available toll-free at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) daily from 8 a.m. until 3 a.m..

Quitline services are confidential and free to callers, and can include telephone and on-line quit coaching as well as printed materials. Quit coaches are available in English, Spanish and several other languages. The quit coaches are also specially trained to help teens, spit tobacco users, and pregnant women.

QuitlineNC is jointly operated by the N.C. Health and Wellness Trust Fund and the N.C. Division of Public Health.

“Callers tell us that QuitlineNC’s quit coaches are non-judgmental and understand what callers are going through,” said Vandana Shah, executive director of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund. “This is a confidential, proven service that the Health and Wellness Trust Fund is proud to sponsor.”

For more information, go to www.quitlinenc.com. An online quitting program, “Become An EX,” is also available for free at www.becomeanex.org.

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www.ncdhhs.gov

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