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QUIT FOR LIFE IN 2016

The AMA is encouraging smokers to make 2016 a truly life-changing, and life-saving, year by resolving to quit the deadly habit in the New Year.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that although quitting smoking was not easy, the enormous health benefits and the financial savings made the effort well worthwhile.

“If you are a smoker, there is nothing more effective you can do to improve your health than to quit smoking,” Professor Owler said.

“Every time you light up, you are damaging your own health as well as the health of those around you. A recent large-scale Australian study found that two-thirds of smokers will die because of their habit. There is no safe level of smoking.”

Australians are heeding the health message. There has been a sustained, decades-long decline in the proportion of Australians who smoke. By 2014-15, just 14.5 per cent of adults (2.6 million people) lit up on a daily basis, down from almost 24 per cent 20 years earlier.

Despite this, it remains a major killer. Smoking contributes to more deaths and hospitalisations than drugs and alcohol combined, and accounts for 13 per cent of cancers, including 81 per cent of lung cancers.

Professor Owler said it was never too late to quit, with health benefits beginning to occur within days of butting out.

“It only takes a few days after quitting for nicotine to be cleared from the system, the heart rate to normalise, and blood pressure to stabilise. Within three to six months, blood flow to the extremities improves, the immune system functions more effectively, and wounds heal better.”

The AMA President said that quitting smoking not only improved health, but it left more money in the pocket.

“Someone who smoked 20 cigarettes a day will save about \$6570 a year from giving up the habit. That’s a major saving,” he said.

Professor Owler applauded those who were committed to making sure 2016 was the year they gave up smoking, and said those making the move to quit could call on a wide range of products and services to help them through such a challenging process.

“Many smokers want to quit, but the highly addictive nature of nicotine can make it an enormously daunting undertaking,” he said.

“But there is lots of advice and support on hand. Your GP is a great source of advice and information, and there is a wide array of nicotine replacement products that many find helpful.

“In addition, there are a growing number of websites, apps, and text messaging services designed to help quitting smokers get through the tough times and stay the path to a healthier life.

“Make 2016 the year that you set course on a healthy, smoke-free life,” Professor Owler said.

The AMA has released an updated Position Statement on Tobacco Smoking and E-cigarettes that can be viewed at: <https://ama.com.au/position-statement/tobacco-smoking-and-e-cigarettes-2015>

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