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quitting, smoking

Cost drives many to quit smoking

Brendan Manning | 27th Dec 2012 8:35 AM

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Mounting social pressure and tax hikes have had a huge impact on Rotorua smokers trying to kick the habit.

Mounting social pressure and tax hikes have had a huge impact on Rotorua smokers trying to kick the habit.

And even more smokers are expected to make an attempt to quit with New Year's resolutions.

About 70,000 fewer adults smoke tobacco daily now than three years ago, according to Ministry of Health figures.

Western Heights Family Health practice nurse Ali Parker said **the increased cost of cigarettes had been the biggest motivation for people wanting to quit.**

"As well as looking at their health and wanting to be healthier and be around for their kids and their mokopuna," she said.

"But I think cost has definitely been the main one."

The family health practice had been offering free smoking cessation services including a 30-minute appointment with a nurse, patches, gum and lozenges, "whatever's going to work best for them".

"We follow that up with weekly calls or texts or they get hold of us if need be.

"I've had people already say, 'I really want to give up in the new year, can you contact me in the new year and get me in here'."

The progress in reducing national smoking rates is the result of wide-ranging initiatives including

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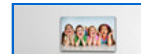
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public education campaigns, advertising restrictions, tax hikes, health warnings and more smoke-free environments.

Quitline spokeswoman Jane MacPherson said whenever tax increases took effect, the helpline recorded a spike in calls.

With New Year's fast approaching, the service had rostered more staff on in anticipation.

"Times are tough for many smokers, **there are the tobacco tax increases and there is a mounting pressure to quit from a social perspective.**

"Tax increases do hurt smokers and in many regards it is a good thing because then they re-evaluate for their health and for their families.

"They can literally save thousands of dollars a year if they quit," Ms MacPherson said.

Retail displays of cigarettes were banned from July 23 this year. **A series of tax rises - with the next 10 per cent rise set for January 1 - have made New Zealand cigarettes among the most expensive in the OECD.**

The Government has set a goal of making New Zealand smoke-free by 2025 and is considering further steps to stop the promotion of tobacco products, including **abolishing duty free sales, licensing retailers and banning sales within a kilometre of schools.**

The Health Ministry received 293 individual submissions on a proposal to force tobacco into plain packaging. Cabinet is expected to make a decision on the proposal early next year. Each year 4500 to 5000 people die from smoking-related causes, including second-hand-smoke exposure.

Maori females are more than twice as likely to be smokers as other females and the prevalence of smoking increases markedly with neighbourhood deprivation.

Costs quitting, smoking

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