



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NEWS RELEASE

Quiet Your Mind: Quit Tobacco Today

Millersburg, OH –

In 2024, roughly one in four Ohio adults used a form of tobacco. Cigarettes remain the most common tobacco product used. Smoking was higher among Ohio adults with frequently poor mental health (24.2%), compared to those with better mental health (11.9%). Those with poor mental health are also more likely to smoke more often, leading to a stronger dependence on nicotine. While approximately 25% of Americans have a mental illness, they consume about 40% of all cigarettes sold in the United States. Often, this is because tobacco is used as a way to lessen mental health symptoms and relieve stress.

It is a common misconception that tobacco is a stress reliever. In reality, nicotine physically hijacks the brain's stress response, creating a chemical trap that mimics anxiety relief while actually fueling it. When a person smokes, nicotine triggers a fleeting release of dopamine, but it also activates the body's stress hormones, including cortisol. As the chemical wears off, the brain experiences acute withdrawal, irritability, tension, and increased anxiety, which drives the urge for the next cigarette. This isn't stress relief; it is the temporary silencing of withdrawal symptoms that the tobacco itself caused. Research shows that instead of calming the nerves, smoking keeps the body in a state of heightened physiological stress. This complicates recovery for those already managing mental health conditions.

The good news is that breaking this addiction is one of the most effective ways to improve long-term mental wellness. Studies published in the *British Medical Journal* have found that quitting smoking can reduce depression and anxiety symptoms as effectively as taking antidepressants. The shift in mental clarity is significant. Research indicates that anxiety levels can drop significantly within just weeks of quitting, breaking the cycle of dependency. In Ohio, we see the reality of this success every day. Approximately 25% of our state's adult population are now former smokers who have reclaimed their health. While nearly 70% of current smokers say they want to quit, many try to do it alone, which yields a success rate of less than 10%.

"We need to be clear about the biological reality: nicotine doesn't help you cope; it mimics a coping mechanism while exacerbating your body's stress levels," says Nicole Williams, Executive Director of the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Wayne and Holmes Counties. "For those in recovery or struggling with mental health, nicotine addiction creates an extra layer of chemical chaos that makes finding balance harder. That is why our message is two-fold: if you haven't started, please don't, protecting your brain from that first exposure is the greatest gift you can give to your future mental health. But if you are struggling, know that there is immense hope. We see people break free every year, and their mental resilience skyrockets when they do."

You do not have to fight this battle alone. Evidence shows that callers to the Ohio Tobacco Quitline are five times more likely to succeed than those who try to quit cold turkey. By calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW, Ohioans can access free, confidential coaching and, in many cases, nicotine replacement therapy to bridge the physical gap during recovery. With the Ohio Tobacco Quitline's Behavioral health program track, participants will receive assistance that supports both quitting and their mental health. With over half of Ohio smokers attempting to quit each year, it is vital to use the tools that work. Quitting isn't just about saving your lungs; it's about quieting your mind and giving yourself the best possible foundation for a healthy, smoke-free life.



There is never a better time to quit than **now**.

There is **free** help available.

▶ **1-800-QUIT-NOW**
(1-800-784-8669)

▶ **ohioquits.org**



Department of
Health

Tobacco Prevention and Cessation
Quit Line: ohioquits.org