



Health Promotion Board Strengthens Smoking Cessation Support to Help More Smokers Kick the Habit

Over 130 new smoking cessation touchpoints added in the community

Singapore, 30 May 2015 – More support is now available for those who are looking to quit smoking. Over the past year, the Health Promotion Board (HPB) has added more than 130 new smoking cessation touchpoints in the community.

To ensure that smoking cessation counselling is readily available for smokers, HPB has worked with partners, including pharmacies such as Guardian, Unity and Watsons, to boost the number of I Quit touchpoints to 283, an 89% increase from 2014. By 2020, this figure will reach 600. These I Quit touchpoints will offer free smoking cessation counselling to smokers who sign up for the 'I Quit 28-Day Countdown' programme.

Smokers often consider the journey towards being smoke-free to be a daunting one. Studies have shown that it takes a smoker an average of six to seven attempts before they can successfully quit smoking¹. With support from their loved ones and professional assistance from healthcare workers such as Quit Consultants and pharmacists, a smoker is more likely to quit and remain smoke-free.

While the National Health Surveillance Survey (NHSS) showed Singapore's smoking prevalence rate has stabilised at 13.3 per cent in 2013, there is a need to further drive down smoking prevalence levels as smoking remains one of the most preventable cause of death in the world today. HPB aims to reduce adult smoking prevalence in Singapore to 12 per cent by 2020.

I Quit 2015

This year, HPB launched its annual National Tobacco Control campaign, I Quit, at a walkathon event, which saw some 300 participants pledging to lead a smoke-free life in commemoration of World No Tobacco Day.

Participants were joined by Guest-of-Honour, Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, who flagged off the event held at West Coast Park this afternoon.

This year marks the fifth edition of I Quit, a national anti-smoking social movement introduced by HPB in 2011. This movement adopts a community-based but personalised approach to build a network of support that helps smokers make their first or next attempt to quit smoking.

In 2014, I Quit garnered increasing interest, with 10,000 smokers signing up for the 'I Quit 28-Day Countdown', a 570 per cent increase from the inaugural I Quit 2011 edition. More than half (57%) of those who participated in 2014 now smoke less or have successfully quit smoking.

Social support is known as an important determinant of success in smoking cessation efforts – studies have indicated those who receive support from their partners and others in their social

¹ http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/

circle during their quit journey are more likely to stop smoking.² Social support also proved to be important in prompting I Quit 2014 participants to embark on their quit journey:

- 40% of those who successfully completed the I Quit programme signed up upon encouragement from their friends
- Additionally, 86% participants who signed up at the I Quit road shows agreed that being able to seek help from HPB's QuitLine consultants motivated them to register

Recognising the strong impact that supporters have and the key role they play in encouraging smokers to kick the habit, this year's I Quit campaign will seek to equip people within a smokers' circle of influence - family, friends, colleagues, health ambassadors, counsellors and healthcare professionals - with tips on how to support smokers during their quit journeys via social media and at roadshows throughout the year.

This year, HPB aims to once again encourage 10,000 smokers to take the pledge to start their quit journey by signing up for the I Quit 28-Day Countdown.

In addition, supermarket chains, Cold Storage, Jasons, Market Place, NTUC Fairprice, Prime Supermarket and Sheng Siong have joined in the fight against tobacco use in support of World No Tobacco Day this year by voluntarily not selling tobacco products on Sunday, 31 May 2015.

Issued by Health Promotion Board

² Park, E. W., et al. (2012) Enhancing partner support to improve smoking cessation (Review)

MEDIA FACTSHEET

About I Quit

I Quit adopts a community-based but personalised approach to build a network of support to help smokers of all ages make their first or next attempt to quit smoking.

Through 283 touchpoints, Health Promotion Board (HPB) provides convenient and accessible programmes that a smoker can tap into wherever he is.

Smokers may get assistance to quit smoking through the following avenues:

Let's Quit: The 28-Day Countdown

Many smokers consider smoking cessation and the journey towards being smoke-free a daunting prospect. This perception is a significant barrier which leads to 52 per cent of smokers delaying their intention to quit smoking.

HPB introduced the Let's Quit: The 28-Day Countdown programme as part of its I Quit 2013 campaign. The 28-Day Countdown programme is based on findings that smokers who stay smoke-free for 28 days are five times more likely to succeed for good.³ Smokers are also more likely to quit successfully when they are in a supportive environment.

The 28-Day Countdown programme helps smokers to break down quitting into actionable steps, empowering them with the knowledge, motivation and support to remain smoke-free through the crucial period of 28 days.

To sign up for the countdown, smokers can register online, at I Quit roadshows, or with partnering pharmacies. Smokers can also log on to www.hpb.gov.sg/iquit or call QuitLine at 1800-438 2000 for more information.

QuitLine

The QuitLine is a helpline for smokers and people who are interested to find out more about how to stop smoking, with trained staff providing customised professional advice and tips. For more information on methods to quit smoking, please call the QuitLine at 1800 438 2000 (Toll-free).

QuitLine SMS

An SMS platform is available for smokers and non-smokers who prefer a non verbal channel to send in questions or seek information on smoking related issues. Questions or clarifications may be sent to +65 9463 3771 or +65 9138 0081. Replies will be provided by Quit Consultants trained to provide help on quitting smoking.

³ R West and J Stapleton 'Clinical and public health significance of treatments to aid smoking cessation', Eur Respir Rev 2008; 17: 110, 199-204

I Quit Club

I Quit Club is a Facebook community created to gather all ex-smokers who have successfully quit smoking or have taken the pledge to quit smoking. The online club is meant to be a platform to share success stories and tips, and provide encouragement to current smokers that quitting is possible. More information can be found at iQuitclub.sg.

I Quit Mobile Application

The I Quit mobile application helps individuals to determine their smoker profile type to utilise the most effective method to quit smoking, and offers tips and strategies to cope with the withdrawal symptoms from quitting smoking. This application is currently available for free downloading on iTunes and Google Play.

HPB Website

HPB's website provides articles, success stories, tips and strategies for smokers and their loved ones to select the best methods to help quit the smoking addiction. More information is available at www.hpb.gov.sg/smokefree