

What to Look for in a Cessation Program... and what to watch out for

Quit tobacco programs are designed to help individuals “recognize and cope with problems that come up during quitting and to provide support and encouragement in staying quit.”¹ Studies have shown that the most successful programs include either group or individual counseling. “There is also a strong association between the intensity of the counseling and the success rate. In general, the more intense the program, the greater the likelihood of success.”¹



What to Look for in a Quit Program

Based on the information above, the things to look for in a quit tobacco program are as follows:

- Find a program that includes group or individual counseling. Be sure that the leader of the group is trained in tobacco cessation. Ask about their training or professional degrees. Ask if they have a diploma or some sort of certificate of training completion for verification. Health educators or other health, medical, or counseling professionals will often offer these types of services.
- Also, look for a program of adequate intensity. Sessions should:
 - last at least 20–30 minutes,
 - last for at least two weeks, and
 - have at least four to seven total sessions.¹

A good tobacco cessation program should also cover the following topics:

- developing a quit plan,
- understanding and dealing with withdrawal symptoms,
- information about the harmful health effects of tobacco and the benefits of quitting,

- social support,
- weight control, and
- maintenance plan for staying quit.²

What to Watch Out for in a Quit Program

There are also some programs to watch out for. Not all programs are ethical. Be very careful of programs that do the following:

- Promise instant or easy success with little effort on your part. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Claim high quit rates but follow participants for less than six months. Quit rates measured 6–12 months after the end of a program are considered the standard.
- Claim high quit rates but do not include those who dropped out of the program or with whom they could not get in touch or follow-up in the measurement.
- Use injections or pills, especially those that have “secret ingredients.” If you choose to use [medications](#), use only those that are FDA-approved, and talk with your health care provider about the best choice for you.
- Charge a high fee. Check with the Better Business Bureau if you have doubts.
- Are not willing to provide references from people who have taken the class.^{1,2}

Sources:

1. American Cancer Society (2005). Quitting smoking. Retrieved March 3, 2005. From http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_10_13X_Guide_for_Quitting_Smoking.asp?sitearea=PED.
2. United States Department of Health and Human Services (1996). Out of ashes: Choosing a method to quit smoking. Available CDC Fax Information Service 1-800-232-1311.

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