

**High Point Regional Health System**  
TOBACCO-FREE CAMPUS INITIATIVE  
**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**On July 4, 2005, High Point Regional Health System adopted a tobacco-free campus policy. Tobacco use of all types is prohibited both indoors and outdoors on all Health System properties. Here are responses to frequently asked questions regarding our decision to become a tobacco-free environment:**

**Q: Why is High Point Regional Health System tobacco-free?**

**A:** As a leader in health care, we have made a commitment to create a healthy community and a tobacco-free campus is a big step in that direction. Modeling healthy behaviors and creating a healthier environment is important to the health of our patients, visitors, employees, volunteers, and community.

**Q: Why was tobacco use selected versus other health risks?**

**A:** Here are a few facts:

- Over 440,000 people die prematurely each year from tobacco-related diseases. This is more deaths than are caused by alcohol, cocaine, crack, heroin, homicides, suicides, car crashes, fires and AIDS *combined*.
- Tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable deaths in North Carolina. 1 in 5 deaths in N.C. can be attributed to smoking.
- Tobacco use is a factor in heart disease, cancer, stroke, and lung disease.
- More than 6.4 million children living today will die prematurely because of a decision they will make as adolescents – the decision to smoke cigarettes.
- Smokers have twice the risk of wound infections as nonsmokers.
- Smoking slows the body's healing process.

**Q: Isn't using tobacco a personal legal right?**

**A:** The decision to use tobacco is not a right, but it is a legal personal choice, and we respect that. However, organizations have the legal right to ban tobacco use on their property, and for the sake of our patients, visitors and employees, we are invoking that right.

**Q: How does this new policy differ from our existing tobacco use policy?**

**A:** Smoking is currently allowed in designated smoking areas. Effective July 4, 2005, tobacco use of all types, including smokeless tobacco, was prohibited anywhere on our Health System campuses.

**Q: What does this policy change mean for employees?**

**A:** Under the new tobacco-free environment policy, employees who use tobacco on Health System property will meet the standard disciplinary action to address a policy violation, up to and including discharge.

**Q: Why doesn't High Point Regional Health System continue to have designated smoking areas?**

**A:** Eliminating tobacco use supports those who are trying to quit, and eliminates tobacco odors on staff who come in contact with patients. We need to effectively eliminate the triggers that make quitting difficult for our patients, visitors and employees. This will also eliminate exposure to second-hand smoke, which the Environmental Protection Agency has classified as a Group A (known human) carcinogen. Additionally, having designated tobacco use areas implies approval of tobacco use, not a message we wish to send.

**Q: Won't the move to a tobacco-free campus just send smokers to restrooms and/or their cars?**

**A:** While the potential exists, we hope all will embrace the efforts to sustain a healthier environment for patients, families, employees, volunteers and physicians. The smell of tobacco smoke is a trigger for those trying to quit or remain tobacco-free while they are in our hospital or on our campus. **It is the responsibility of every employee** to help our co-workers, our patients, and visitors in this process.

**Q: How is the tobacco-free campus policy enforced?**

**A: Education is the key.** Signage alerts all visitors to our campus of the tobacco-free policy. Patients are notified in a variety of ways, including at pre-admission, in the admissions department, and even by their personal physician. **All employees** who see patients or visitors using tobacco on our property should be courteous in informing them of the tobacco-free policy of the Health System. It's simple to say "I'm sorry, you may not be aware that our campus is tobacco-free, so smoking (or chewing tobacco) is not allowed here." Our Safety and Security Department has also been given the task of courteously enforcing the policy and has been provided with resources to make enforcement as easy as possible.

**Q: What other hospitals in North Carolina have similar tobacco-free campus policies or are planning to implement a tobacco-free campus?**

**A:** Currently the following North Carolina hospitals or health systems are tobacco-free campuses: First Health of the Carolinas (Pinehurst, Rockingham, and more than 25 other campuses), Mission Health System (Asheville), Angel Medical Center (western North Carolina), Pardee Hospital (Hendersonville), and Highlands – Cashiers Hospital (Highlands). In addition, several other North Carolina hospitals are currently pursuing tobacco-free status. Tobacco-free hospital campuses exist all over the United States as well. For example, the prestigious Mayo Clinic has been tobacco-free since 1988.

**Q: How has High Point Regional Health System educated patients, visitors, and the public about the new tobacco-free campus policy?**

**A:** Prior to July 4, 2005, HPRHS notified the press and also posted signage in our lobbies notifying the public about the new policy. We worked closely with physician offices to educate patients and their families. More than 80 new "Tobacco-free campus" signs were also posted on all of our campuses.

**Q: What if I am working with a patient who does not want to quit smoking or using smokeless tobacco right now?**

**A:** Patients have the right to choose their own health care behaviors. However, while at High Point Regional, everyone will be asked to observe our tobacco-free boundaries. We have counselors who can help people stop smoking or using smokeless tobacco or can assist people in making their stay here as comfortable as possible with some alternatives to tobacco use, including nicotine replacement therapy

**Q: Given the stress that families face during hospitalization and hospital emergencies, how will the Health System address this issue?**

**A:** Our intent is to intervene, educate, and heal through tobacco cessation resources that will assist patients and family members when they are here. Patients and families have access to QuitSmart tobacco cessation programs. We have also begun developing other opportunities for patients, family members, employees and volunteers to experience healthy ways to deal with stress. And we are also working on ways to keep patient families connected if they feel they must leave the campus to smoke.

**Q: What kind of support is High Point Regional Health System providing to those employees who wish to stop smoking or using smokeless tobacco products?**

**A:** We have several support programs in place:

- For the remainder of 2005, High Point Regional Hospital will offer the QuitSmart tobacco cessation program at no charge for those employees and their immediate adult household members who want to quit. For more information contact **Sue Cumpston, Wellness Coordinator, at 878-6000, extension 2601 or at [scumpston@hprhs.com](mailto:scumpston@hprhs.com).**
- A course of nicotine replacement therapy (patches or gum) will be offered free of charge to any employee who wishes to quit this year.
- Workplace Solutions<sup>®</sup>, our employee assistance program, is also available to any employee who needs support in responding to the Health System policy change.
- Wellbutrin (Zyban), a prescription drug which has shown some value in helping smokers quit, is also on the list of drugs that are covered by Plan 1 of the Health System's health insurance policy.
- Visit these web sites to learn of other opportunities:

[www.quitnownc.org](http://www.quitnownc.org)

[www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org) (Freedom from Smoking program)

[www.cdc.gov/tobacco/](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/)

[www.quitnet.com](http://www.quitnet.com)

[www.4women.gov/quitsmoking/](http://www.4women.gov/quitsmoking/) (A Breath of Fresh Air! Independence from Smoking)

[www.tobaccofreenurses.org](http://www.tobaccofreenurses.org)

[www.americanlegacy.org/greatstart/html](http://www.americanlegacy.org/greatstart/html) (For pregnant smokers)