

# BRIEF INTERVENTIONS

## The 5 A's and A, A, R for Tobacco Cessation



Advising patients to stop smoking increases the chance they will successfully quit.<sup>1</sup> According to the *Clinical Practice Guideline*, the gold standard for tobacco use intervention is the “5 A’s”: Ask, Advise, Assess, Assist, and Arrange.<sup>2</sup> Here’s a guide for this approach with sample questions and statements.

**Ask: Ask about tobacco use at every visit**

Ensure that an officewide procedure is in place where tobacco use is asked about and documented each time you see a patient.

- *Do you currently use tobacco?*
- *How often do you smoke?*

**Advise: Advise smokers to quit**

In a clear, strong, caring and personalized manner, encourage every tobacco user to quit.

- *Quitting is the single most important thing you can do to protect your health as well as your family.*
- *I care about your health and well-being. Quitting smoking is one of the best things you can do for yourself*

**Assess: Assess each smoker’s willingness to quit**

Not all smokers have the same level of motivation to quit. Ask all patients about their motivation.

- *On a scale of 0-10 (with 0 being not at all important and 10 being very important), how important is it for you to quit smoking?*
- *What would it take for you to give quitting a try?*

**Assist: Assist smokers with a quit plan**

You can work with patients to create a quit plan, like identifying strategies to deal with smoking triggers and using approved medications such as nicotine patches, nicotine gum, Zyban® or Chantix®.

- *When you quit, what will be your top three triggers?*
- *What do you think you can do when you get a craving to smoke?*

**Arrange: Arrange follow-up contact**

Follow-up contact with patients helps prevent relapse. It is most effective to talk with patients, even by phone, on the quit date and a few times during the critical first week.

- *Let’s talk on your quit date. We can see how things are going and if you need to make any changes to your quit plan.*
- *You can call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free telephone support while you are quitting.*



CALIFORNIA  
SMOKERS' HELPLINE  
**1-800-NO-BUTTS**

Moores UCSD Cancer Center, 9500 Gilman Drive, #0905, La Jolla CA 92093-0905, T: 858-300-1010, F: 858-300-1099, [www.NoButts.org](http://www.NoButts.org)  
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There is an alternate approach to the 5 A's called "Ask-Advise-Refer". This is a simplified version that allows busy clinicians to Ask and Advise, then Refer patients to a quitline or other cessation services to Assess, Assist, and Arrange.

## Ask

### Ask about tobacco use at every visit

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## Advise

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## Refer

### Refer smokers to a cessation service

Refer to the California Smokers' Helpline, Peer-to-peer counselor, and/or other program.

- *You can call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free telephone support while you are quitting.*
- *Let me put you in contact with a local cessation program that can offer you assistance as you get ready to quit.*

### Once you Refer your patient, the cessation service will:

- **Assess** the smoker's willingness to quit
- **Assist** the smoker with a quit plan (e.g. the Helpline provides behavioral medication counseling)
- **Arrange** follow-up contact (e.g. the Helpline provides up to 4 follow-up calls – timing is based on the probability of relapse)

<sup>1</sup>Stead LF, Buitrago D, Preciado N, Sanchez G, Hartmann-Boyce J, Lancaster T. Physician advice for smoking cessation. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2013, Issue 5. Art. No.: CD000165. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD000165.pub4.

<sup>2</sup>Treating Tobacco Use and Dependence: 2008 Update. June 2015. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. <http://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/clinicians-providers/guidelines-recommendations/tobacco/index.html>

Take the next step and visit [www.nobutts.org](http://www.nobutts.org) to:



Learn more about our free tobacco cessation services.



Download free patient materials.



Check out our free materials and trainings for health professionals.



Register for our free, online referral service.