

Knox Public Health

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Tobacco cessation support group to return in September

Knox Public Health's (KPH) tobacco cessation support groups have been on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, group classes will once again be offered starting Thursday, Sept. 3 at 7 pm in KPH's conference room 11660 Upper Gilchrist Road, Mount Vernon. The group class will be held for eight weeks with plans to offer additional group sessions each quarter in 2021. No group class will be held at Knox Community Hospital at this time. Pre-registration is appreciated as the size of the group will be limited to 10 individuals based on the mandated COVID-19 guidelines.

"We want to offer group support in the safest way possible," said Mike Whitaker, tobacco treatment specialist for KPH. "The conference room will be set up with chairs spaced 6-feet apart. Hand sanitizer will be available and face masks will be provided and worn during each session. No one should attend the group meeting if they are feeling ill or have a high temperature."

Individual counseling will be available anytime for those not comfortable in a group or simply cannot attend an evening session. "We have tobacco treatment specialists that can meet one-on-one with you at our facility or over the phone in designing a quit plan," said Whitaker.

There is an enrollment fee of \$10 for either group or individual counseling to help sustain the program. The majority of the funding is made possible through an investment by United Way of Knox County.

Once enrolled, clients will receive up to eight weeks of nicotine replacement therapy or NRT (nicotine patches, gum and/or lozenges) based on current use of tobacco products, including vape devices. Prescription medicine is not available, but individuals can talk to their medical provider if interested. The cessation program is an evidence-based program to help anyone quit tobacco successfully.

"Quitting tobacco will require some work on our client's part," mentioned Whitaker. "However, the first step in quitting is having a strong desire to want to finally break the addiction. The proven methods of combining counseling, support, and NRT have helped hundreds of Knox County residents successfully quit during the last 17 years of our program."

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