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Nipping it in the bud

This World No Tobacco Day (31 May) SWSLHD Respiratory Physician Dr Belinda Cochrane and the Wests Tigers' are calling for more people to support their friends, family and colleagues to quit smoking.

Nine out of 10 households in south western Sydney are smoke free and so are all the Hospitals across the District which Dr Cochrane said has helped with reducing the effects of second hand smoke exposure.

"We want to continue generating awareness about the health risks of tobacco use and related issues such as second hand smoke, particularly around children," Dr Cochrane said.

For some people, it may take several attempts to quit successfully. Dr Cochrane said not to give up on quitting as the benefits will eventually outweigh the cravings.

"Many smokers know that smoking damages their health, but they may not realise that the benefits of quitting tobacco start almost immediately," Dr Cochrane said.

"Using anti-smoking products along with smoking cessation counselling at least doubles your chances of quitting.

"We recommend nicotine patches are used in combination with a short-acting nicotine replacement product, such as an inhaler, tablet, lozenge, gum or spray to help with cravings.

"Some subsidised anti-smoking products are available on prescription, just ask your treating doctor for more information," she said.

Wests Tigers' Josh Aloiai said he never really had an interest in cigarettes because he was always focused on playing good football.

"I need to keep my speed and fast reactions up so I can perform to the best of my ability on the field," Josh said.

"If I was a smoker, there is no way I'd be able to participate in power training drills or have the lung capacity to meet the demands of a rigorous footy game," he said.

Elaine Morris who is a registered nurse has also become an anti-tobacco advocate, after quitting cigarettes.

"When I arrived from Scotland in 2007, I did a spirometry test to assess how well my lungs were working and despite being 39 years old at that time, my lungs were functioning as if they were 76 years old.

"I gave up that same year and now at 49 years old; my lungs are functioning as they should for my age, which shows that smoking was severely affecting my ability to breathe.

"I know from personal experience that quitting smoking is probably one of the hardest things anyone can do but it was easily the best decision I ever made.

"If you feel like picking up a pack, distract yourself with a hobby such as reading, exercise, taking the dog for a walk or doing some gardening," Ms Morris said.

Tips to increase your success in quitting smoking:

- 1) Use anti-smoking products to help ease withdrawal symptoms. Talk to your General Practitioner.
- 2) Ring the Quitline on 13 78 48 for confidential counselling in a range of languages.
- 3) Visit the Quit website www.icanquit.com.au for up-to-date information and personalised quitting advice.
- 4) If you are experiencing cravings you can use a short-acting nicotine replacement product. Alternatively, you can do something to distract yourself until the intense cravings stop such as go for a walk or have a glass of water.
- 5) Establish a healthy routine including exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet. For support in getting started, contact the Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service, which is a free, confidential telephone-based service for people over the age of 16 years - Phone 1300 806 258 or register online www.gethealthynsw.com.
- 6) Many people are not successful at quitting on their first attempt. So, if at first you don't succeed, don't give up on making further quit attempts.