



## Smokers need support to quit says GP

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### **'I've tried to quit smoking many times and I just can't do it'**

A Gippsland doctor suggests that a decision to avoid smoking indoors can make a big difference to anyone trying to quit.

According to Lakes Entrance GP, Dr Patrick Kinsella, the decision to quit smoking is one of the biggest challenges a smoker will face and for many, the support around them will be a significant factor in success.

"If there are others who smoke in the household, this will make it even harder," Dr Kinsella said. "So not allowing any smoking inside is a good place to start for someone who wants to quit. It takes time for cravings to fade and having other smokers in any house makes it more difficult.

"A recent report said the average smoker takes seven attempts to successfully quit. The odd one does it at the first attempt but some take many more attempts. So don't fall back on that old chestnut of 'I've tried lots of times and I just can't do it'."

Dr Kinsella, chair of the East Gippsland and Wellington Clinical Council for Gippsland PHN, said the PHN had undertaken extensive research as part of its role and uses this data and information to inform health planning across the region. Comparing health related data in Gippsland and its six local government areas with Victoria and Australia helps identify what is needed in Gippsland.

This research shows that in Gippsland, smoking remains a significant health issue with a higher percentage of smokers at 20 per cent compared with the Victorian average 13 per cent.

"Smoking is a serious and complicated addiction and quitting is a huge challenge," Dr Kinsella said. "Our research shows that people in Gippsland experiencing social and economic disadvantage have a significantly higher risk of alcohol and other drug issues.



“Cancer rates in Gippsland are higher than the rest of Victoria, especially lung cancer.”

Dr Kinsella said Gippsland people were over-represented in many categories of lung-related health facts compared to the rest of Victoria, including other regional areas. These include:

- Potentially preventable hospitalisations due to Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) – Gippsland 285 per 100,000 people; Victoria 260;
- Avoidable deaths due to respiratory system diseases – Gippsland 10.3 per 100,000 people; Victoria 8.

Dr Kinsella said Gippsland PHN funded initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of the community in areas where the needs were highest.

“Your GP is a good starting point if you want to quit smoking. The first step is the hardest, and that first step is really committing yourself to quitting and meaning it. There is help available but you have got to make that commitment if that help is to work.

“Remember also that 10 years after quitting, many of the risk that smoking brings have returned to normal, so it’s never too late.”

Tools available at [www.quit.org.au](http://www.quit.org.au) can help people understand their smoking habits and choose the best way to quit. Smokers can also speak to their GP or phone the Quitline on 13 78 48 to get personalised, non-judgmental coaching and advice.

For more facts on the health of Gippsland, go to <https://www.gphn.org.au/populationhealthplanning/resources-2/>

**ENDS**

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