

# Number of american smokers who've tried to quit has stalled

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(HealthDay)—Even if it takes multiple attempts, a majority of smokers

do finally kick the habit. But new research finds the percentage of smokers who are even trying to quit has flatlined.

Between 2001 and 2013, the rate of quit attempts rose steadily among U.S. [smokers](#). But newer data, for the years 2011 to 2017, finds that "most states experienced no change in quit attempt prevalence," according to researchers at the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

That's troubling, the researchers said, because "most smokers make multiple quit attempts before succeeding, as many as 30 on average." So, "smokers should be encouraged to keep trying to quit until they succeed," said the team led by Kimp Walton, of the CDC's Office on Smoking and Health.

As the researchers pointed out, Americans have made great strides against smoking, with smoking rates among adults falling from over 42% in 1965 to just 14% in 2017. That's millions of smokers who've successfully abandoned the lethal habit.

And the new federal data—gleaned from all U.S. states and two territories—finds that, on average, about 65% of current smokers during the years 2011 to 2017 said they had tried to quit at least once over the past year.

But according to Walton's team, that number hasn't budged for years and is still below the 80% quit-attempt rate aimed for by U.S. Healthy People 2020 guidelines.

What to do? According to the researchers, both smokers and the health care providers who want to help them should "be reminded that, despite barriers to quitting, three of five U.S. adults who ever smoked have quit successfully."

Patricia Folan directs the Center for Tobacco Control at Northwell Health in Great Neck, N.Y. She agreed that when it comes to quitting smoking, multiple tries are often needed, but practice makes perfect.

"Each time an individual makes a quit attempt, they have the opportunity to learn something that may assist them in their next quit attempt," said Folan, who wasn't involved in the new research. "For example, they may discover that they need to use the FDA-approved cessation medications for a longer period of time or use more of the medication to maintain comfort and avoid withdrawal symptoms during the quitting process."

Other smokers may find that avoiding certain triggers—other smokers, drinking or even the shops they bought cigarettes from—can help them quit [smoking](#) for good, she said.

And both Folan and the CDC researchers said public policies can go a long way toward helping smokers quit.

"Anti-tobacco media campaigns, high taxes on cigarettes, state-supported quit-lines, insurance coverage for cessation medications, and tobacco-free environments all contribute to increasing quit attempts and quitting," Folan noted.

Recently, many states have raised the legal age at which people can buy tobacco products to 21—another step that helps existing smokers decide to quit, she said.

Finally, "evidence demonstrates that coaching and counseling, along with cessation medications, can double or triple quit success," Folan said.

The new study was published in the July 19 issue of the CDC's *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

**More information:** The American Lung Association outlines the [health dangers of smoking](#).

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