

# Freshstart<sup>®</sup>

Here are some important things to know about the goals of the American Cancer Society's *Freshstart*<sup>®</sup> program and how we evaluate it.

## ***The primary goal of Freshstart is to help participants plan a successful quit attempt.***

**What this means:** Having made a previous quit attempt is the strongest predictor that a smoker will quit successfully. Freshstart provides participants with information about effective strategies and helps motivate and prepare them to make a successful quit attempt.

**How this affects evaluation:** The main outcome measure is the percentage of participants that make a quit attempt.

## ***Freshstart teaches participants effective ways to overcome nicotine dependence.***

**What this means:** Participants choose a combination of techniques and cessation treatments they will use in making a quit attempt, including other evidence-based treatments available for quitting tobacco such as individualized counseling (via telephone or in-person), over-the-counter nicotine-replacement-therapy, and prescription medicines. Also, participants make an informed choice about which techniques (cold-turkey, scheduled smoking, tapering) they will use in making their quit attempt.

**How this affects evaluation:** Since each participant will choose his or her own methods for making a quit attempt, an overall quit rate of participants does not reflect one approach or the quit rate attributable to Freshstart by itself.

## ***Anyone who wants to quit using tobacco may participate in Freshstart.***

**What this means:** Individual counseling and prescription medications are typically provided to smokers who indicate a 'readiness to quit'. However, many smokers are unsure about quitting. Freshstart is designed to help any tobacco user, including those who may be unsure about wanting to quit, and

specifically addresses ambivalence about quitting. The information, activities and discussion topics help participants discover why they smoke and what motivates them to quit.

**How this affects evaluation:** Freshstart quit rates will vary depending on the readiness to quit of participants in a particular group. This makes it difficult to compare results of different Freshstart groups or with other treatments that are only given to smokers who are motivated to quit.

## ***Each Freshstart group is unique.***

**What this means:** We train facilitator about how to initiate discussion topics and activities to prompt participants to consider what they think and plan how they will manage to quit successfully. The program materials help facilitators ensure that the crucial information and activities are provided. However, an important component of the program is the social support that participants receive from each other. This is a very valuable part of the program, but it is one that cannot be implemented uniformly.

**How this affects evaluation:** Group-based cessation programs may be implemented differently in different places, so we must always assess how the program was implemented in order to understand the program outcomes.

## ***Freshstart classes are administered locally.***

**What this means:** Centrally tracking information of locally administered programs can be problematic, particularly when trying to collect long-term (6-month or longer) outcomes.

**How this affects program evaluation:** Response rates may be low when tracking long-term outcomes. A quit attempt is the most accurate and feasible indicator of program success.