



Fort Bend County Podcasts

Podcast Episode 47 – Nicotine Cessation

September 25, 2025

****Disclaimer****-Please note, anything that is said in the podcast does not supersede actual plan or program languages, and anyone wishing for specific information in regard to coverage should go directly to the plan documents found under risk management on eConnect.

Gina: Welcome to this week's Benefit Detective Podcast. I'm Gina.

Wendy: And I'm Wendy. *doorbell* Let's welcome Dr. Lu with our Fort Bend County Employee Clinic.

Dr. Lu: Hello, everyone. Thanks for having me back again.

Wendy: What is the purpose of the nicotine sensation, and what are the benefits of quitting nicotine?

Dr. Lu: Good question. Just to give you some statistics from CDC, in 2020, 12.5 percent of adults currently smoked cigarettes, and more than four hundred eighty thousand deaths each year are attributed to cigarette smoking and exposure to tobacco smoke, making it the leading preventable cause of death in The United States. Smoking increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, multiple types of cancer, and chronic lung disease. Quitting smoking is beneficial to health at any age because it reduces the risk of premature death and can add as much as ten years to life expectancy.

Dr. Lu: I always remember back in medical school when we were first learning about this, one of the things that just the recurring theme in all the various subjects was if you're smoking, you gotta quit because like it's like I just said, it increases the risk of a lot of things. Almost, I would venture to say, everything. So definitely a good idea to quit.

Wendy: So, the nicotine sensation program, does it also cover other, nicotine products?

Dr. Lu: Yes. It is, all inclusive. So, it includes cigarette smoking, cigar smoking, but also other forms of tobacco like dip, snuff, chewing tobacco, even vaping. And we're here to help with any kind of tobacco or nicotine, you know, addiction. And because there are benefits regardless of how you get it in your body, it's always a good idea to quit this.

Gina: Dr. Lu, can you give us some more, like, specifics on the benefits of quitting smoking? Like, what are some of the symptoms that someone may experience after quitting?

Dr. Lu: So, you know, one of the things that a lot of smokers will notice is that pretty quickly after they, reduce or especially quit smoking, their breathing improves both at rest and with exertion. And so, therefore, their exercise tolerance also improves. And they also noticed that if they've gotten to the point where they have that classic, smoker's cough, that also improves. And maybe in some cases, maybe even goes away completely depending on how bad it was. Additionally, a lot of, smokers also tell me that their smell and taste improve. So, food just tastes better. Everything is better.



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Gina: I've heard that. Yes.

Dr. Lu: Yeah. And along those lines too, speaking of the oral area, I've also noticed that a lot of smokers have discolored tongues, and they've told me of their discolored skin on their fingers that hold the cigarette, and that also will resolve once they quit.

Gina: Oh, wow. That's so interesting. So, if a person is wanting to join the nicotine sensation program, how long is the program?

Dr. Lu: The program is twelve consecutive weeks, and that means weekly meetings with a provider, and we try to get it with the same provider each time. And you're allowed to miss only one of those appointments, and we strongly prefer in person visits.

Gina: When is the deadline for joining nicotine cessation or to get the discount for the upcoming year?

Dr. Lu: So, the deadline is going to be, 10/06/2025. If an employee completes the nicotine cessation program, they will have their additional nicotine premium waived. So, then their insurance premium deductions will be the same as a non-nicotine user.

Gina: That was all great information. Thank you so much, Dr. Lu, for joining us today and taking time out of your busy schedule. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Dr. Lu: Yes. I really strongly encourage everyone to enroll in the program. It's been a great success so far. I can actually say that a hundred percent of our patients who have done it so far have at least reduced their tobacco use or even completely quit, and that includes both cigarette smokers and, dip snuff users. So, I'm very encouraged by that and very motivated to get as many people as we can enrolled and hopefully get more people quit on their, tobacco use. So, call the clinic or come in and make an appointment, set it up. You can meet with any of the providers, and we always try to keep you consistently with the one same provider because it really, helps to engender that, stronger, provider and patient's relationship to help you quit.

Wendy: So, if you're interested in joining the nicotine cessation program, call the clinic at (281) 633-7750. So, keep in mind, those participating in the program qualify for their medication to be free to help assist them in quitting.

Gina: Well, that's a wrap for this week's Benefit Detective Podcast. I'm Gina.

Wendy: And I'm Wendy. And listen for our next podcast.

Gina: And remember, the Benefit Detectives are here to help!