

Five minute saliva test to identify smokers rolled out to health schemes

Posted on Thursday 2nd January 2014

Smokers who need extra incentives to quit the cigarettes this new year should take note that even private health insurance premiums may be reduced if they can prove they have stopped for good – and with the aid of a pioneering test from the University of Birmingham, the proof can be easy to acquire.

January is one of the most common times to attempt to quit smoking – but NHS figures show that many people will fail in their first attempt.

But as well as the numerous health benefits of quitting, the economic benefits cannot be ignored, including saving the cost of the cigarettes and lower insurance premiums.

The Saliva SmokeScreen test is part of the PruHealth free Vitality Healthcheck programme to verify non-smoking in their policy holders, so they can qualify for its unique non-smoker cash back reward. The saliva test, which was developed by Dr Graham Cope detects cotinine, a breakdown product of nicotine, is being used as part of a comprehensive health check carried out in pharmacies throughout the country. The Vitality Healthcheck also includes testing for cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure, and includes calculation of a Body Mass Index is being delivered by roadtohealth within Lloyds Pharmacies.

Dr Graham Cope, honorary senior research fellow at the University of Birmingham, said: “Smoking is an important risk factor for many chronic diseases, such as respiratory diseases, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. It also causes blood pressure to rise and is linked with high cholesterol levels. We are pleased the SmokeScreen test has been chosen as the means to monitor smoking in this programme.”

Ends

Notes to editors

Dr Graham Cope is available for interview – call 07980497079 to arrange.

Demonstrations of the Saliva Smokescreen test are being offered. Call the press office on 0121 414 5134 to arrange.

- The Saliva SmokeScreen test is manufactured in the UK by GFC Diagnostics Ltd (www.gfcdiagnostics.com). The company specialises in rapid tests for smoking and monitoring treatment for tuberculosis. With offices in Birmingham and Bicester, Oxfordshire it supplies its technology to many parts of the world, including many developing countries where expensive sophisticated testing technology is not available.

- roadtohealth – making the world healthier was formed to create innovative and effective solutions to enable everybody to fully understand their current state of health, learn how healthy they could possibly be and then achieve it. Their unique 'Q Score' provides an easily understood 'health state' benchmark and our personalised 'health coach' programme provides the most effective and accessible, self-empowered health improvement programme for any individual.

- PruHealth with Vitality is a leading private medical insurance and wellness programme provider which launched in the UK in 2004 in response to a growing need for consumer-focused private medical insurance products. It is a joint venture between UK insurer, Prudential and Discovery, a listed company operating in the health, wellness, life, investment and financial services markets in South Africa, UK, USA and China. The Vitality programme helps people understand how they can improve their own personal health, makes it cheaper and easier for them to get healthy and gives rewards to keep them motivated, through a range of tools and discounts.