



## **Start the Holidays off Right by Kicking the Habit**

The holidays are a great time to spend with family and friends, exchange gifts and enjoy holiday treats. In addition, it is a time to reflect on the past year and make resolutions for the upcoming year. If you are a tobacco user, make plans to become healthier by deciding 2012 is the year you become tobacco-free. Whether you are a smoker or a smokeless tobacco user, there are many benefits to quitting.

“Nicotine is an incredibly addictive drug and the cravings and withdrawal symptoms can overpower even the strongest will,” said Roy Hart, Director of the Office of Tobacco Control at the Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH). “Those who seek and receive professional help are twice as likely to quit for good.”

Nearly 509,000 Mississippi adults smoke cigarettes and 69,000 Mississippi kids under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking. Every year, over 500 Mississippians die from the exposure to secondhand smoke.

Seven and a half percent of Mississippi adults and more than 16 percent of Mississippi male high school students use some form of spit or chewing tobacco.

“Many people mistakenly believe that using spit or chew tobacco is healthier than lighting up,” said Hart. “This isn’t true. There are actually 28 known cancer-causing chemicals in spit tobacco.” Hart said using spit tobacco may increase a person’s risk of cancers of the lip, tongue, cheeks, gums and mouth. In addition, there is also some evidence that spit tobacco may cause cancer in organs other than the mouth.

“Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States,” said Leslie Horton, director of the Mississippi Tobacco-Free Coalition of Warren and Claiborne Counties. “The best way to protect yourself is to stop using tobacco products immediately. Make a plan, enlist the help of family and friends and seek professional help.”

For help with quitting tobacco use, visit the Mississippi Tobacco Quitline website, [www.QuitlineMS.com](http://www.QuitlineMS.com), or call the Mississippi Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT NOW.