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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry of Health & Wellness Observes World No Tobacco Day

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Today, May 31, the Ministry of Health & Wellness joins the global community in observing World No Tobacco Day under the theme “Commit to Quit”.

This year, the National Drug Abuse Control Council-Belize (NDACC) will carry out several activities throughout the country. The yearly awareness campaign informs the public of the dangers of tobacco use, the business practices of tobacco companies, the ministry’s efforts in fighting the tobacco epidemic in Belize, and advising what individuals can do to claim their right to a healthier lifestyle and protect future generations.

Tobacco causes eight million deaths every year worldwide. Studies in 2020 have shown that smokers are more likely to develop severe diseases with COVID-19 compared to non-smokers. This evidence has triggered millions to want to quit tobacco. Quitting can be challenging, especially with the added social and economic stress that have come because of the pandemic, but there are many reasons to quit.

The benefits of quitting tobacco are almost immediate. After just 20 minutes of quitting smoking, your heart rate drops. Within 12 hours, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal. Within two to 12 weeks, your circulation improves and lung function increases. Within one to nine months, coughing and shortness of breath decrease. Within five to 15 years, your stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker. Within 10 years, your lung cancer death rate is about half that of a smoker. Within 15 years, your risk of heart disease is that of a non-smoker.

The nicotine found in tobacco is highly addictive and creates dependence. The behavioral and emotional ties to tobacco use – like having a cigarette

with your coffee, craving tobacco, feelings of sadness or stress – make it hard to kick the habit; however, there is hope. With professional support and cessation services, tobacco users double their chances of quitting successfully.

The Ministry of Health & Wellness through NDACC acknowledges the critical importance of improving health and saving the lives of Belizeans and is committed to helping tobacco users in Belize to quit smoking. The ministry, therefore, invites Belizeans to join the worldwide campaign by pledging to quit smoking and encourages smokers to seek help by visiting any NDACC-Belize office to learn more about the services offered.

Ends

For more information, contact:
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