

## **More Help from Medicare for Quitting Smoking**

Smokers on Medicare who want to quit can now get up to eight sessions of counseling, the Associated Press reported Aug. 28. Sessions will be free beginning in January under the new health care reform law, which eliminates co-pays for a wide range of preventive services. According to the article, other insurers already provide cessation counseling to smokers. Medicare currently covers counseling for patients with smoking-related illnesses, as well as for drugs that help smokers quit. Its coverage of preventive counseling is new.

Although smokers 65 and older are less likely than younger adults to try to quit smoking, studies have shown that they are more likely to be successful if they do try to quit. Older adults are also more likely to successfully quit if given counseling. "The elderly can respond to smoking cessation counseling even if they have been smoking for 30 years or more," said Medicare's chief medical officer, Dr. Barry Straube. "We do know we can see a reduction in the death rate and complications from smoking-related illnesses." "According to Straube, smoking-related illnesses will cost Medicare \$800 billion dollars between 1995 and 2015".