

FDA campaign reframes quitting for smokers

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The Every Try Counts campaign to change how smokers see their last attempt to quit.

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WASHINGTON: The Food and Drug Administration's Every Try Counts anti-smoking campaign is competing with tobacco ads for a smoker's attention at the convenience store counter.

Every Try Counts, which will launch in January, is the FDA's first smoking cessation campaign targeting adults. The FDA wants to reframe quitting smoking for this audience as a process that often takes more than one attempt.

"The messaging is very different from a cessation standpoint," said Kathy Crosby, director of the Office of Health Communication and Education in the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products. "How we're approaching the messaging is by not talking about the final quit, but trying to convince people to try to quit again and change how they perceive the fact that they tried to quit in the past as failures."

The goal is to provide messages of support and encouragement for smokers trying to quit. The campaign will have ads in convenience stores and gas stations near the cigarettes, online, in print, on radio and TV, and on billboards. Every Try Counts also has a website with tips for how to get through a craving and an option to sign up for encouraging text messages.

Over the two years, the FDA will spend \$60 million on paid media, with a total campaign budget of \$75 million, Crosby said.

"We don't have a share of market because we don't have a product, but we do have an ideal," Crosby said. "Our goal was to create a shared voice in an environment that is heavily laden with triggers for smokers who are trying to quit. The hope is we're going to deliver a message of encouragement and hope at a point where they might feel prompted to buy a product when they're trying to quit, when people are most vulnerable."

The FDA conducted extensive research on adults who tried to quit smoking. It found smokers who couldn't quit felt "failure and shame, and a lack of optimism that they'd ever be able to do it," Crosby said.

Therefore the FDA decided to place encouraging messages like, "You never truly failed at quitting if you're still trying," in places where smokers' resolve may be tested.

Every Try Counts will run for two years in 35 counties around the country. The FDA worked with FCB New York, media buying agency Initiative, and PR firms Hager Sharp and IQ to develop and execute the campaign.

Crosby said the 35 markets were chosen because they had a smoking index higher than the national average, had a high population density of smokers, and had enough media weight to warrant buying the ads. Many of the chosen markets are on the East Coast and throughout the Midwest and South.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that of the 55% of adult smokers who tried to quit in 2015, only about 7% were successful.

"They see it as two camps: you're either a smoker or you're not," Crosby said. "We want to reframe failure. We want to create a middle space in between to give permission to be an attempted quitter for the people trying to quit, practicing to quit, or on the road to quitting. That will hopefully give them permission to try again and try often by being very motivating."