

Smoke-Free Environment: Frequently Asked Questions

Why is UHN becoming smoke-free?

The University Health Network is committed to providing a healthy, safe and comfortable environment for all our employees, patients and visitors. Smoking and second-hand smoke is the leading cause of preventable death (Giovino, 2007) and there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke, even when that exposure occurs outdoors. As a result, UHN has committed to becoming a smoke-free environment.

Did you know?

- The Ontario government spends \$817,733,502 on acute care hospitalization for both active and passive smokers.
- Tobacco kills approximately 37,000 Canadians each year.
- Diseases caused by second-hand smoke include: Heart Disease, Lung Cancer, Nasal Sinus Cancer and Non-Malignant Respiratory Disease.
- Each year, more than 1,000 non-smoking Canadians die from second-hand smoke.
- The health benefits of quitting can be seen as early as 20 minutes after your last cigarette.

**Courtesy of Southlake Regional Health Centre and Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre*

Are other hospitals going smoke-free?

Yes. On January 1st, 2016, new Ontario regulations ([Smoke-Free Ontario Act and the Electronic Cigarettes Act](#)) were established. It bans the smoking of both tobacco and electronic cigarettes on all hospital grounds and all hospitals in the area will begin transitioning to become smoke-free environments.

Those who are caught smoking on UHN grounds are subject to fines from by-law officers. Individuals can be fined up to \$5,000 and UHN can be fined up to \$300,000.

What does it mean to have smoke-free grounds?

The smoke-free policy prohibits the smoking of tobacco products and electronic cigarettes for all persons in or on all UHN-owned grounds (areas currently designated as smoking areas will be removed). This includes parking areas owned by UHN. This policy extends to all persons on UHN property.

Exceptions include:

- *For the purpose of conducting research or testing concerning tobacco or e-cigarettes in a research or testing facility*
- *Use of tobacco for traditional Aboriginal cultural or spiritual purposes*

To whom does the policy apply?

UHN's smoke-free policy applies to employees, medical staff, volunteers, patients, visitors, learners and subcontractors.

What does going smoke-free mean for UHN staff?

UHN staff that use tobacco products, like our patients and visitors, will not be able to smoke on UHN property. Everyone has a role to play in ensuring compliance with smoke-free grounds. If staff observe someone smoking on the property, it is asked that you approach the individual and inform them of UHN's smoke-free policy.

Will I be required to quit smoking?

The smoke-free policy does not ask staff, patients, students, or visitors to quit smoking, but rather, prohibits smoking on UHN property. For staff, patients, learners, and visitors seeking support to quit, there are resources available through UHN's Outpatient Pharmacies, UHN Wellness, and through Community Partners (such as [Toronto Public Health](#), [Smoker's Helpline](#), and [CAMH](#)). UHN is committed to providing a healthy, safe and comfortable environment for all our employees, patients and visitors. This initiative is consistent with our goals of supporting good health and wellness.

Where on hospital grounds does the smoke-free policy apply?

Smoking is prohibited on all UHN grounds, including indoor and outdoor spaces and all UHN owned parking garages.

Why can't we have designated outdoor smoking areas?

For many tobacco users, seeing others smoke provides a significant trigger and may compromise their ability to quit. In addition, allowing tobacco use on UHN property does not align with our commitment as a healthcare institution to promote health and wellness.

Can staff use Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products while at work?

Yes, Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) – patch, nicotine gum, or lozenge, nicotine inhaler – can be used during work hours to manage nicotine cravings.

Do employee benefits plans insured with Sun Life cover the cost of NRT?

At UHN, smoking cessation medications (such as Champix /Varenicline and Wellbutrin/Bupropion) are covered for both non-union and unionized groups that have benefits coverage with Sun Life.

The following non-union employees are not covered: those enrolled in Option 1 and 5 of the Full-time Benefits of Choice Plan, Option 1 of the Part-time Benefits of Choice Plan, and those enrolled in the Part-Time Grandfathered Plan.

However, employees that have a Health Spending Account under the Benefits of Choice Plans can use this to cover the cost of smoking cessation medication up to the maximum amount allowable.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) is not covered by the benefits plans.

Will use of tobacco for traditional Aboriginal ceremonies be allowed on UHN property?

As outlined in the *Smoke-Free Ontario Act*, the policy acknowledges the traditional use of tobacco that forms part of Aboriginal culture and spirituality.