



BCHD PRESS RELEASE

Baltimore City Health Department

1001 E. Fayette Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Mayor – Oxiris Barbot, M.D., Commissioner of Health

Media Contact: *Brian Schleiter*
443-984-2623
mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HEALTH DEPARTMENT OBSERVES WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

BALTIMORE, MD (May 31, 2011) – Baltimore City Commissioner of Health Dr. Oxiris Barbot today called on residents to join the global community in commemorating World No Tobacco Day, held each May 31st.

Tobacco use contributes to early heart attacks, strokes, chronic lung diseases and cancers. There is also compelling evidence of the harmful impact of secondhand smoke to nonsmokers and children who suffer from respiratory infections. Smoking is also associated with preterm births, stillbirths and low birth weight, all of which can cause infant mortality. Eighty percent of all fire deaths occur in the home; careless smoking is often to blame.

This year, more than 5 million people worldwide will die from a tobacco-related heart attack, stroke, cancer, lung ailment or other disease. Having killed 100 million people during the 20th century, tobacco use could kill 1 billion during the 21st century, according to the World Health Organization.

“On this day, residents can encourage their loved ones to stop using tobacco or, perhaps, make that decision themselves,” said Commissioner of Health Dr. Oxiris Barbot. “The Health Department is committed to ending tobacco use in Baltimore and we stand ready to support individuals who are willing to embrace a healthy lifestyle.”

Earlier this month, the Health Department released Healthy Baltimore 2015, a five year plan for improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities in Baltimore. Priority Area #3 of Healthy Baltimore 2015 is “Be tobacco Free.” The measurable goals are to:

- Decrease by 20% the number of adults who smoke. Currently 28.3% of Baltimore residents self-report being smokers.
- Decrease by 20% the number of teens who smoke. Currently 11.7% of teens report smoking regularly.
- Decrease by 15% the number of women who report smoking during pregnancy. The current rate is 92.1 of every 1,000 live births.

In 2009, the percentage of adult smokers in Baltimore City (28.3%) was higher than Kentucky and West Virginia – the two states tied for the highest percentage of smokers (25.6%) in the country. The smoking rate and for Baltimore City men was 35%.

Though Maryland has one of the lowest smoking rates in the country, significant disparities exist among self-reporting Baltimore City smokers with high and low income and educational attainment levels. The smoking rates for city residents with an income of less than \$15,000 is 36 percent (compared to 15.1 percent for the highest income group). Likewise, the rate for college graduates is 14.8 percent, compared to 33.9 percent for those with a high school education or less, according to the 2009 Baltimore City Community Health Survey.

“Tobacco use is one of the most preventable causes of death and disease for men and women,” Dr. Barbot said. “World No Tobacco Day is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco use on the health and well-being of Baltimore City residents.”

The Health Department, working in conjunction with its partners, provides the following educational outreach and treatment support for tobacco users:

- Residents may call 410-361-9765 for a referral to a cessation program.
- The Health Department’s SmokeFree Baltimore Tour Bus will provide tobacco use and quitting information from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Baltimore Medical System at Orleans Square health center at 2323 Orleans St.
- The department’s Tobacco Use Prevention and Cessation Program provides pharmacotherapies to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) for uninsured clients in their cessation programs. Free patches are distributed to clients – either through one-on-one counseling by a health care provider or during cessation classes. To find the FQHC nearest you, call 311, the city’s service line.
- The national Quit Line – 1-800-QUITNOW – provides counseling to callers who want to quit. Qualifying callers are provided with a month’s supply of patches and gum.

For more information, visit our Website at <http://www.baltimorehealth.org>.

###