

# Quit smoking now – DOH

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The Department of Health (DOH) marked World No Tobacco Day yesterday by urging Filipino smokers to kick the habit, pick up a healthy lifestyle, and save themselves from various cardiovascular diseases.

“I would like to reiterate that tobacco use and breathing secondhand smoke may indeed break your heart. You may have heard this a million times, smoking is dangerous to your health, but we still want to remind you every time we have a chance,” said Health Secretary Francisco Duque III at a press conference at the DOH Central office in Manila.

Citing a data from the World Health Organization (WHO), Duque said that tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke contribute to approximately 12 percent of all heart disease deaths. The health secretary said ischemic heart diseases or the hardening of arteries continues to be the leading cause of death in the country with at least 74,000 cases recorded in 2016.

“Tobacco smoke thickens the blood, increases the risk of blood clots, narrow the arteries and restricts oxygen in the blood,” said Duque, advising smokers to quit smoking and seek help through phone-supported tobacco cessation called Quitline (165-364), which was launched last year, providing realtime counseling and support.

## Universal healthcare

Meanwhile, people’s organizations including senior citizens, people with disability, patients, and tobacco victims have renewed their public appeal to support the universal health care law on World No Tobacco Day.

Emer Rojas president of the Quezon City based New Voice of the Philippines (NVAP) said yesterday every Filipino should be automatically enrolled through Universal Health Care to address the gap in treatment and service provision for indigent patients.

With many Filipinos afflicted by lifestyle related non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular disease, Rojas noted that having access to Universal Health Care would ensure that they have a fighting chance in life.

The Universal Health Care bill, which is currently sitting in the Senate would best be implemented through the revenues derived from sin tax on tobacco, he said. (With a report from Chito A. Chavez)