



***NOTE TO MEDIA:** Nearly a dozen "Success Stories" and downloadable photos for different regions of New York State are available at the Quitline's Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/newsroom>. Inspirational New Yorkers became nicotine-free in 2020 for a variety of reasons: COVID-19 concerns, the birth of a child, improved health, battling cancer and much more. Please reach out to the Quitline any time, any day, for supplemental interviews to enhance your coverage of New Year's resolutions and stories of hope heading into 2021.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 SURVIVOR FROM LONG ISLAND BECAME TOBACCO-FREE IN THE NICK OF TIME

Despite the challenges of 2020, Doug B. overcame a 43-year addiction to smoking in March with support from the New York State Smokers' Quitline

SUFFOLK COUNTY, N.Y. – Dec. 31, 2020 – Doug B. of Ridge, N.Y. feels blessed he ended 43 years of smoking in early March. Just one month later, the Long Islander contracted COVID-19 and suffered severe breathing issues and chest pain. Doug survived, and today



celebrates nine months and counting of a healthier, tobacco-free life thanks to support from the New York State Smokers' Quitline (Quitline).

Doug (*pictured fishing at left*), 59, tried cigarettes as a teenager and soon became addicted to nicotine. He had contemplated improving his health throughout the years but never made a serious attempt to change his routine until earlier this year. While some tobacco users often require numerous quit-attempts to become tobacco-free, Doug fortunately succeeded on the first try – and apparently, just in time.

"After contracting the coronavirus in mid-April, my doctor said I was fortunate to have become tobacco-free, even just for those initial five weeks," Doug said. "My health outcomes could have been much worse. Surviving COVID-19 only makes me appreciate being tobacco-free even more. I smoked for many years, but hope living a healthier lifestyle will reduce my risk of getting cancer and increase my years of living."

Doug gave a "final goodbye" to cigarettes immediately upon return from a cruise with his wife. The following day, he contacted the Quitline for extra support. Just days after receiving free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) in the form of nicotine patches and nicotine gum via mail from the Quitline, COVID-19 struck New York State with a fury.

"Those first few weeks were the worst, especially with everything going on," Doug recalled. "My anxiety was sky-high, but having support is what helped me succeed. The Quitline's Quit Coaches were so friendly and motivating. The patches helped me wean off nicotine and the gum particularly added a boost whenever a strong craving occurred. I still have urges even today from time to time, but I've learned how to overcome them."

In addition to leveraging the Quitline's free telephonic support and NRT products, Doug finds the Quitline's website at nysmokefree.com very useful. "On my own time, it's good to review the tips on the website for behavior change," he said. "I think keeping yourself busy with other activities is crucial for remaining tobacco-free, particularly during the beginning of the process."

Doug's favorite hobby is fishing, and becoming tobacco-free yields many benefits to improve the overall experience. Besides having more free time and money to fish, Doug breathes better, becomes less winded during activity and has clearer focus.

"I'm no longer burdened by thinking about when and where I'll have to smoke," he said. "It was a struggle at first to overcome this addiction, but the long-term health benefits far outweigh any initial difficulty. It's freeing to be tobacco-free, and I encourage all those trying to quit to keep at it. Don't give up and don't give in. Get your health back now instead of suffering later."

The Quitline encourages all tobacco and vape-product users to make 2021 their best year ever by becoming tobacco-free, especially in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. According to the CDC, those who smoke [suffer more severe effects](#) if infected with the coronavirus.

The Quitline recommends tobacco and vape-product users consult a healthcare professional as part of a tobacco-free journey. Healthcare professionals can provide referrals to the Quitline for free quit-coaching and free NRT such as nicotine patches and nicotine gum or lozenges – and nearly all participants are eligible. The Quitline’s Quit Coaches are available seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. by calling 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) beginning at 9 a.m. or by visiting www.nysmokefree.com and requesting a call.

About the New York State Smokers’ Quitline

The New York State Smokers’ Quitline is a service of the New York State Department of Health and based at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, N.Y. It is one of the first and busiest state quitlines in the nation and has responded to nearly 3 million calls since it began operating in 2000. The Quitline encourages nicotine users to talk with their healthcare professionals and access available Medicaid or health insurance benefits for stop-smoking medications. All New York State residents can call **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487) for coaching and resources, free of charge, seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. Visit www.nysmokefree.com for more information.

About Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center is a community united by the drive to eliminate cancer’s grip on humanity by unlocking its secrets through personalized approaches and unleashing the healing power of hope. Founded by Dr. Roswell Park in 1898, it is the only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center in Upstate New York. Learn more at www.roswellpark.org, or contact us at 1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355) or ASKRoswell@roswellpark.org.

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