



Labrador - Grenfell
Health

Questions and Answers about the Smoke-Free Premises Policy

Q: Why is Labrador-Grenfell Health undertaking this initiative?

A: The vision of Labrador-Grenfell Health is of healthy people, living in healthy communities. In support of this vision, the goal of this policy is to create a healthy environment for employees, volunteers, clients, residents and visitors. As a health organization, we have a responsibility to be role models by developing and supporting policies in the best interests of health and wellness.

Q: Who is leading this initiative?

A: At the direction of the Board of Directors, and in keeping with the Board's strategic goal to improve population health, a Smoke-Free Task Team was formed to help plan and implement the new policy. The Task Team has representation from a number of key areas, including: acute care, medical services, long term care, home care, mental health, child, youth and family services, health promotion, environmental health, human resources and communications. Representatives from the Nunatsiavut Department of Health and Social Development and the Innu Nation are also a part of this Task Team.

Q: How does this policy differ from our existing smoking policies/practices?

A: Prior to now, our policies and practices prohibited smoking inside of our hospitals but allowed smoking in designated outdoor smoking areas for employees, volunteers, patients and visitors (i.e., beyond a certain radius, marked in some areas by a blue line). Effective January, 2008, all our grounds will be smoke free, including parking lots and vehicles on the premises.

Q: Why can't individuals smoke outside Labrador-Grenfell Health facilities?

A: Smoking is a leading preventable cause of disease and death and represents a major healthcare epidemic in our country. Second-hand smoke has been proven hazardous to people's health. As a healthcare provider, we believe our clients, visitors, employees, volunteers and our community at large will see a significant health benefit as a result of implementing this new initiative. It is the right thing to do for the health of us all.

Q. We have always had a designated smoking area - why is this being eliminated?

A: Labrador-Grenfell Health is committed to ensuring a healthy community. Providing a place to smoke does not support that mission and vision. Research shows that designated areas do not protect non-smokers from the effects of second-hand smoke. Providing a place to smoke does not support our goal to create a healthier environment for our patients, families, employees, and visitors.

Q: Does the policy apply to residents in long term care?

A: The new policy applies to everyone. The goal of the new policy is to ultimately work towards a 100% smoke-free environment, including long term care. We realize that this

change in long term care settings will take some time, and we are working towards alternatives and supports for residents who currently smoke.

Q: What is Labrador-Grenfell Health doing to help employees/volunteers who smoke? Are there resources to help employees with the transition?

A: Labrador-Grenfell Health will have resources and educational materials available, including both materials to help communicate the new policy and information to help individuals in their own efforts to stop smoking. Cessation programs will be provided. In addition, we will be offering the following supports for those who choose to quit :

Employees

- *Attendance at cessation programs DURING WORK HOURS.* Senior Executive has agreed that employees may participate in the Adult Group Smoking Cessation programs on work time, depending on operational considerations. In other words, if the nature of the work allows the supervisor to free an employee from his or her duties at that time, they will be permitted to attend smoking cessation sessions during work hours. Additional Smoking Cessation Program Leaders are being trained very soon - please watch for further information on dates and times for these sessions in the near future.
- *Support for family members trying to quit.* Family members will be welcomed to participate with employees in the Adult Group Smoking Cessation programs offered on-site.
- *Financial Subsidy for Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs).* Effective December 1, 2007, there will be an 80% subsidy provided for NRTs. Labrador-Grenfell Health will fund 80% of the cost for one course of NRTs per year for all permanent full time, permanent part time, casual/temporary employees who wish to attempt quitting through this method.
 - Therapies covered: Nicotine Patch, Zyban, Nicorette Gum, Champix.
 - Process to follow: Employees will be asked to pay the cost up front, and then submit their receipts to the Financial Services Office nearest them for reimbursement.

Inpatients

- All patients will be advised of the smoke-free policy and their obligations under the policy on admission. This discussion must be documented in the inpatient nursing notes.
- All patients will be screened for tobacco use upon admission. Tobacco use will be documented in the inpatient nursing notes or physician's progress notes.
- Inpatients who smoke will be provided a supportive environment during their involuntary tobacco abstinence, including referral to smoking cessation programs and nicotine replacement therapy as prescribed by the physician/clinician if appropriate.

Outpatients/Clients

- All outpatients/clients will be assessed for tobacco use and offered effective tobacco-use treatment and referral at all clinical encounters.
- All outpatients will be advised/reminded of the policy when making their appointment and on all appointment letters.

Q: Can employees smoke on their break?

A: Yes; as long as they smoke off the property.

Q. Can people smoke in their vehicles?

A: No. Smoking is not permitted in any parking areas, including vehicles on the premises.

Q: Why ban smoking in vehicles on the property?

A: Labrador-Grenfell Health believes that if smoking was permitted in vehicles:

- Public and staff would be smoking in a confined space and we would be supporting a very unhealthy behavior
- Staff would return to work with an intensified smoke odor on their clothing due to smoking in a confined space
- Our property would not be smoke free.

Q: What about individual rights?

A: Your individual right to choose to smoke is respected. You are not being asked to quit smoking. However, health authorities and other employers also have the right to create a healthy environment for those they serve. For this reason, we ask that individuals refrain from smoking on the premises.

Q: What happens if I continue to smoke on Labrador-Grenfell Health premises?

A: As with any other policy, staff will be coached regarding expectations and held accountable to meeting those expectations. As with any other administrative policy, offenders will be subject to the progressive discipline process.

- All patients/clients, employees, physicians, volunteers and the general public have shared responsibility for supporting and complying with the Smoke-Free policy.
- Security staff are responsible for patrolling entrances and grounds to ensure that all persons are in compliance with the policy.
- Employees who do not comply with the policy will be subject to disciplinary action as per collective agreements and the organization's human resources policies.
- At sites where security services are not provided, site management will monitor and enforce the policy.

Q: What about patients?

A: We will provide our patients and guests with information about resources to help them quit smoking on a permanent basis. Nicotine replacement therapies will be offered for inpatients, as staff will no longer escort patients outside the building or off the property to smoke. We will also provide our staff with appropriate support in how best to handle potential conflicts regarding this issue. This situation may be challenging, and we know that a cultural change of this magnitude can take time.

Q: How do patients who smoke seek help?

A: Upon admission, patients will be encouraged to notify the admissions staff if they smoke. This information will be forwarded to their physician, who can make arrangements to provide them with cessation products or discuss alternative resources. All outpatients/clients will be assessed for tobacco use and offered effective tobacco-use treatment and referral at all clinical encounters.

Q: Can patients go off-site to smoke?

A: Patients who request to leave the property to smoke will be informed that the entire premises are smoke-free and that by leaving the property to smoke, they are placing themselves at risk for medical complications. There is also a risk of injury as hospital staff will not accompany people off the property. If a patient wishes to smoke, he/she will have to assume responsibility for his/her own safety.

Q: Where should we direct visitors who insist on smoking?

A: We should inform individuals to leave the premises to smoke. The property lines at each site will be marked with appropriate signage.

Q: Will employees/volunteers be expected to ask people to stop smoking?

A: Yes. We are all responsible for maintaining a healthy environment and for supporting, promoting and enforcing this policy. It is a shared responsibility. We understand that people may feel uncomfortable in approaching people and asking them to not smoke on hospital property. All employees who see patients and visitors smoking on the property should be courteous in informing them of the smoke-free policy. For example: "Maybe you haven't heard of our new policy... for the health of our patients, our grounds are 100% smoke free". You can share an enforcement card with them (available at the switchboards, security and communications office). This helpful card shares information about our policy and resources to help them quit.

Q: If a visitor or patient refuses to stop smoking, what should we do?

A: If employees have given the visitor or patient a reminder card and asked politely that they stop smoking, than we have done our best. Cultural changes like this can take time, and we cannot expect everyone to be compliant right away. In facilities where security staff are present, you may also draw upon their assistance and support.

Q: How is Labrador-Grenfell Health educating patients, visitors and the public?

A: Between July 2007 and January 2008, Labrador-Grenfell Health created and provided information and educational materials that were distributed throughout its facilities and posted on its website. There were stories in the media. In January, signs will be posted at the perimeter of our facilities and entrances. While we will make every effort to inform patients and their family members prior to their admission, we can expect that many patients and their families will arrive unprepared for a hospitalization experience with no smoking. We are working on ways to provide nicotine replacement therapy for our patients during their stay. We will also educate our staff members in ways to interact with patients and their family members who are having difficulty adhering to the policy.

Q. I receive services in my home. Since this is my home, does the policy apply? Can't I smoke if I want?

A. As an employer, Labrador-Grenfell Health has a responsibility to protect its employees from the harmful effects of exposure to second-hand smoke. We ask that when our employees are providing a service in a person's home that they refrain from smoking while receiving care.

Q. Is the health authority discriminating against smokers with this policy?

A. Labrador-Grenfell Health has a right to decide whether or not to permit smoking on its grounds. As a health authority, we have a responsibility to create and support policies in the

best interest of health for all people within the region. Smoking is a leading cause of death and preventable disease, and we are uncomfortable assisting people to engage in what we know to be unhealthy behavior. We also recognize smoking is a powerful addiction and have therefore made smoking cessation options available. Instead of discriminating, we are demonstrating our commitment to healthy living by creating a smoking-free environment.

Q. Where can I get more information about smoking cessation services?

A. If you would like more information on how to quit smoking, please speak with your local health care provider (Physician, Health Educator, Public Health Nurse, or Employee Health Nurse) or call the Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-363-5864.