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NGOs join hands for no-smoking factories

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MUMBAI: A group of organisations has decided to target factories in Mumbai to reduce the prevalence of smoking at the workplace.

Navi Mumbai-based NGO Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health has collaborated with the Harvard School of Public Health to conduct a 'Worksite Tobacco Control' study at 24 manufacturing units,

employing between 100 to 500 people, in and around the city.

During the five-year study, the organisations will first conduct a study to assess the smoking behaviour among blue-collared workers and then start an intervention programme at 12 of the units while the rest will be used as controls.

"We will hold counselling sessions to motivate workers to quit smoking in a scientific manner and follow up with them for at least six months," said Dr R

Pingle, president of the Indian Association of Occupational Health, which is also associated with the project.

Healis director Dr PC Gupta said the results would be used to develop a workplace-based tobacco prevention and control programme that can be replicated across India.

"Such programmes have helped companies in the US, save on medical costs and worker compensation costs. Reduction in smoking rate leads

to less absenteeism and increase in productivity," said Professor Glorian Sorensen from the Harvard School of Public Health.

Healis and the Harvard School of Public Health have been conducting a similar tobacco control programme for teachers in Patna since 2003.

Dr Surendra Shastri from Tata Memorial Hospital recommended that a no-smoking policy should be included in the Factories Act, 1948.