

November 19th is the Great American Smokeout

The American Cancer Society sponsors the Great American Smokeout on the **third Thursday of November**, challenging smokers to give up cigarettes for 24 hours.

Did you know? Smoking remains the single largest preventable cause of death and illness in the world. Smoking causes an estimated 480,000 deaths every year, or about 1 in 5 deaths.

Discover the short- and long-term benefits of quitting smoking.

Short-term benefits

- Heart rate and blood pressure, which are abnormally high while smoking, begin to return to normal.
- Twelve hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal. (Carbon monoxide reduces the blood's ability to carry oxygen.)
- Within two weeks of quitting, you might notice it's easier to walk up the stairs because you may be less short of breath. Cilia – tiny broom-like hairs that clean your lungs – start to regrow and regain normal function very quickly after you quit smoking.
- Within several months of quitting, people can expect substantial improvements in lung function.

Long-term benefits

- Quitting reduces the risk of cancer, heart disease and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD).
- Regardless of age, you are less likely to die from a smoking-related illness than those who continue to smoke.

Prepare an action plan to quit with these steps.

1. **Set a quit date.** Pick a date within the next two weeks. Don't choose a day where you know you will be busy, stressed or tempted to smoke.
2. **Tell family and friends.** Explain to them how they can help you quit and what your triggers are. Quitting is easier when you have support.
3. **Anticipate and plan for challenges.** Cravings and withdrawal are common. Avoid triggers – specific persons, places or activities that make you feel like smoking.
4. **Remove cigarettes and lighters from your home, work and car.** Don't save one pack of cigarettes "just in case." Remove the smell of smoke by cleaning your clothes, car and home.
5. **Talk with your doctor or pharmacist about nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)** options, such as gum, patches or lozenges.
6. **Reward yourself.** Celebrate being smoke free for 24 hours, one week and one month. Treat yourself with a nice dinner or any other fun smoke-free activity.

- [National Cancer Institute, "How Quitting Improves Your Health"](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention "Build Your Quit Plan"](#)

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