

The Great American Smoke Out: November 18, 2021

The American Cancer Society sponsors the Great American Smokeout each year on the third Thursday of November. During the Great American Smokeout, smokers are challenged to give up cigarettes for at least 24 hours. Despite what some may say, it's NEVER too late to quit smoking! In fact, smokers may experience the health benefits of quitting smoking within days of quitting.

- A few days after quitting - the carbon monoxide levels in your blood drop to normal.
- 2 weeks to 3 months after quitting - the risk of heart attack begins to drop and lung functions begin to improve.
- 1 to 9 months after quitting - coughing and shortness of breath decrease. The tiny hairlike structures called cilia that move mucus out of the lungs start to regain normal function, increasing their ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs, and reduce the risk of infection.
- 1 year after quitting - heart attack risk drops sharply.
- 2 to 5 years after quitting - the stroke risk is reduced to that of a non-smoker.
- 5 years after quitting - the risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, and bladder is cut in half.
- 10 years after quitting - the risk of dying from lung cancer is about half of a smoker.
- 15 years after quitting - the risk of coronary heart disease is back to that of a non-smoker.



Some additional benefits of quitting smoking include: food will taste better, your sense of smell will return to normal, your teeth and fingernails will stop yellowing, and ordinary activities such as climbing stairs will leave you less short of breath.

How to Plan to Quit

While there may not be a specific right way to quit smoking, it is beneficial to have a plan. Plan ideas can include:

- Pick a date and mark it on your calendar.
- Tell your friends and family about your quit date.
- Get rid of all the cigarettes, ashtrays, lighters and smokeless tobacco products in your home, car and workplace.
- Stock up on oral substitute items such as sugarless gum, carrot sticks, hard candy, cinnamon sticks, coffee stirrers, straws, and/or toothpicks.
- Decide if you will use a nicotine replacement therapy or other medicines. Will you call a telephone quit line? Attend a class? If so, find out how to sign up as soon as possible.
- Talk to your doctor about what might work best for you. Also, call your insurance company about coverage for programs and medicines.
- Set up a support system—this could be a group program or a friend or family member who has successfully quit and is willing to help you.
- Ask family and friends who still use tobacco not to use them around you and not to leave cigarettes out where you can see them.
- Think about your past attempts to quit and try to figure out what worked and what didn't.

On Your Quit Day

- Do not use tobacco at all—not even a puff.
- Stay busy - with current hobbies or a new one.
- Drink lots of water.
- Start using nicotine replacement, if that is your choice.
- Follow your self-help plan.
- Avoid situations where the urge to smoke is strong.
- Avoid people who are using tobacco.
- Drink less alcohol or avoid it completely.
- Change your routine, like taking a different route to work, drink tea instead of coffee, eat meals in a different place and try different foods.

<https://gsahec.org/articles/tobacco-article/great-american-smokeout-november-2021/>

<https://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/guide-quit-smoking/deciding-to-quit-smoking-and-making-a-plan.html>

