American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout encourages smokers to make a plan to quit

The 42nd Great American Smokeout is on November 16, 2017

The American Cancer Society is encouraging smokers to make a plan to quit smoking during the 42nd Great American Smokeout on November 16, 2017.

Tobacco use is the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. It kills nearly a half a million people a year and accounts for 30 percent of all cancer deaths. Yet, 40 million American adults still smoke.

"The most important thing smokers can do to improve their health is to quit cigarettes and other forms of combustible tobacco," said Cliff Douglas, JD, vice president for tobacco control for the American Cancer Society. "Tobacco is extremely addictive, and quitting is hard. There is no single way to quit, so smokers should get support to find the method that works for them."

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In the past, public health experts encouraged smokers quit cold turkey on a single day. In fact, that was the original intent of the Great American Smokeout. However, research has found that successful quitting is a process. It starts with a plan, often takes time and requires a lot of support.

The American Cancer Society recommends smokers quit tobacco using evidence-based methods, especially the combination of counseling and FDA-approved medications. ACS has a free Quitline that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide support, from the first steps of making a plan, to living a healthy, smoke-free life. More information is available at 1-800-227-2345 or online at cancer.org/smokeout.

The Great American Smokeout is also a time when individuals and organizations across the country rally around efforts to create the first tobacco-free generation. The American Cancer Society encourages people use this event to come together to make a difference, from supporting a single smoker's quit effort, to initiating workplace quit programs, to advocating for widespread tobacco-free policy changes.

The first Great American occurred on November 18, 1976, when the California Division of the American Cancer Society got nearly one million smokers to quit for the day. The Society took the program nationwide in 1977. The Smokeout has helped dramatically change Americans' attitudes about smoking, helping bring about community programs and smoke-free laws that are now saving lives in many states. Many public places and work areas are now smoke-free, protecting non-smokers and encouraging smokers to quit.