

# Help is Available for Smokers Who Want to Quit

## Statement of Howard K. Koh, M.D., M.P.H., Assistant Secretary for Health and Elizabeth T.H. Fontham, M.P.H., Dr. P.H., President, American Cancer Society

ATLANTA 2009/11/19 -“With recent news that adult smoking rates have remained unchanged since 2004, and research showing that a clear majority of smokers want to quit, we urge smokers to mark today’s 34th Great American Smokeout by making a quit plan and finding out about free resources that help them quit successfully. Research shows that advance planning and preparation greatly increase the likelihood of succeeding.

“No matter when you quit, you are much more likely to increase your life expectancy and quality of life. Quitting smoking reduces the risk of cancer and other diseases, and increases life expectancy. Smokers who quit at age 35 gain an average of eight years of life expectancy; those who quit at age 55 gain about five years; and even long-term smokers who quit at 65 gain three years.

“We also recognize that we all have a role in helping communities move toward a tobacco-free future. Recent studies show that state and local smoke-free laws, higher tobacco excise taxes and fully funded tobacco prevention and cessation programs have helped many people quit smoking, prevented children from ever starting, and diminished the harmful effects of secondhand smoke among non-smokers.

“The Great American Smokeout Web site ([www.cancer.org/GreatAmericans](http://www.cancer.org/GreatAmericans)) provides user-friendly tips and tools to help smokers create a smoke-free life. Special features include a Quit Clock that allows users to count down to a quit day within 30 days, and offers tips for each day; and Craving Stopper, which helps smokers beat cravings by offering a fun distraction.

“There are a number of resources available for those who want to quit. We encourage anybody who wants to quit to call the American Cancer Society Quit For Life® Program operated and managed by Free & Clear® at 1-800-227-2345 or the National Cancer Institute’s national telephone quitline at 1-877-44U- QUIT for more information such as tobacco cessation and coaching services that can help increase the chances of quitting for good. You may also visit the HHS Web site, [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov), for more information to help you prepare and support you in the days and weeks after you quit.”

### **About the Assistant Secretary for Health and the Office of Public Health and Science**

Dr. Koh oversees the HHS Office of Public Health and Science, the Commissioned Corps of the U.S. Public Health Service, and the Office of the Surgeon General. He also serves as senior public health advisor to the Secretary. The Office of Public Health and Science includes an array of interdisciplinary programs related to disease prevention, health promotion, the reduction of health disparities, women’s and minority health, HIV/AIDS, vaccine programs, physical fitness and sports, bioethics, population affairs, blood supply, research integrity and human research protections.

### **About the American Cancer Society**

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation’s largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing about \$3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, about 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit [cancer.org](http://cancer.org).

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