Great American Smokeout encourages smokers to quit for good

American Cancer Society Offers Tips to Quit During the Great American Smokeout November 20

ATLANTA – November 19, 2014 — Smoking is one of the rare things in life when it's OK to be a quitter. The American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout takes place on the third Thursday of November each year. This year, that's November 20, which marks the 39th Great American Smokeout. Smokers are encouraged to use the date to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and begin their path to health by quitting on that day. Quitting even for one day can be an important step toward a healthier life – one that can significantly reduce cancer risk.

Although there's no one right way to quit that works for everyone, there are some key elements that can help put smokers and users of other forms of tobacco on the road to living a longer and healthier life. No matter how old you are or how long you've smoked, quitting can help you live longer and be healthier.

"Thanks in part to the Society's work, cigarette smoking among U.S. adults has decreased from more than 42 percent in 1965 to around 19 percent today," said Richard C. Wender, M.D. Chief Cancer Control Officer for the American Cancer Society. "Yet tobacco use still accounts for at least 30 percent of all cancer deaths and 80 percent of lung cancer deaths."

Researchers in the Society's Epidemiology Research program continue to analyze data from Cancer Prevention Study-II (CPS-II), which the Society began in 1982, on the association between smoking and cancer. Recently CPS-II revealed that women who smoke today have a much greater risk of death from lung cancer than female smokers 20 or 40 years ago, likely reflecting changes in smoking behavior.

Women smokers today smoke more like men than women in previous generations, beginning earlier in adolescence and, until recently, smoking more cigarettes per day.

Smoking cigarettes causes more than 127,000 deaths from lung cancer each year in U.S. men and women, accounting for more than 80% of all lung cancer deaths in the U.S.

"For every person who dies from a smoking-related disease, 20 others suffer at least one serious illness from smoking," says Wender. "We hope the Great American Smokeout continues to have an impact, helping smokers realize they can add up to a decade onto their life by quitting now."

Consider these stay-quit tips from the American Cancer Society.

Set a date Picking a "quit day" is a critical first step. It's best to pick a date and allow yourself enough time to prepare and create a plan but not enough time to change your mind. You might want to join thousands of other people across the country in choosing Nov. 20, the date of the American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout as your quit day or the day you make a plan to quit for good. Tell your friends and family which day you've chosen so they can help support you and hold you accountable. Download a free Smokeout countdown clock for your computer desktop at cancer.org/smokeout with tips to help you prepare for your quit day.

Make a plan Successfully quitting is a matter of planning and commitment, not luck. Many smokers prefer to quit

cold turkey on their quit day while others try to smoke fewer cigarettes leading up to their quit day to slowly reduce the amount of nicotine in their body and reduce withdrawal symptoms. Decide what works best for you, whether it's nicotine replacement or other medicines, joining a stop-smoking class, going to Nicotine Anonymous meetings, using self-help materials such as books and pamphlets, or some combination of these methods. The telephone and web-based Quit For Life Program, brought to you by the American Cancer Society and operated by Alere Wellbeing, is another option that links tobacco users with trained coaches who can help you develop a plan to quit for good.

Once your plan is in place, start working on small changes like discarding cigarettes and ashtrays in your home and car, stocking up on oral substitutes like sugarless gum and hard candy or carrot sticks, and practice saying, "No thank you, I don't smoke," when offered a cigarette. Of course, it's very important to set up a support system through a group program or a friend or family member who has successfully quit and will help you through the difficult days ahead.

Don't smoke on your quit day Don't take even one puff! Keep your mind and body occupied by exercising or losing yourself in an enjoyable hobby, and avoid situations where the urge to smoke is strong (this may include avoiding alcohol). You may need to change up your routine by taking a different route to work, eating breakfast in a different place, or eating different foods. It will take time to unlink smoking from your daily activities, and even if you are using a nicotine replacement you may still have strong urges to smoke.

Avoid rationalizations "I'll have just one cigarette to get me through this situation" … "Everyone dies of something" … "How bad is smoking, really?" Write down rationalizations as they come up and recognize them as messages that can trick you into going back to smoking. Be ready with a distraction to redirect your thoughts to something else. You can download a free "craving stopper" application at cancer.org/smokeout to help distract yourself with a memory match game or find more tips to help when a craving hits.

Bounce back from slips A slip is a one-time mistake that is quickly corrected; a relapse is going back to smoking. While it may be tempting to use a slip as an excuse to go back to your old ways, you also can look at what went wrong and renew your commitment. Try not to get too discouraged – very few people are able to quit for good on the first try. Use what you learn from the slip to make a stronger quitting attempt next time.

Quitting is hard, but you can increase your chances of success with help. Join the American Cancer Society for the Great American Smokeout on Nov. 20 and explore free resources and tools at cancer.org/smokeout or call 1-800-227-2345.

The American Cancer Society created the trademarked concept for and held its first Great American Smokeout in 1976 as a way to inspire and encourage smokers to quit for a day. One million people quit smoking for a day at the 1976 event in California. The Great American Smokeout encourages smokers to commit to making a long-term plan to quit smoking for good.

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About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers saving lives and fighting for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. As the largest voluntary health organization, the Society's efforts have contributed to a 20 percent decline in cancer death rates in the U.S. since

1991, and a 50 percent drop in smoking rates. Thanks in part to our progress nearly 14 million Americans who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will celebrate more birthdays this year. We're determined to finish the fight against cancer. We're finding cures as the nation's largest private, not-for-profit investor in cancer research, ensuring people facing cancer have the help they need and continuing the fight for access to quality health care, lifesaving screenings, clean air, and more. For more information, to get help, or to join the fight, call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.