Ask The Expert

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Topic: The Great American Smokeout®

What is it?

Each year, the **American Cancer Society** promotes the **Great American Smokeout®** on the third Thursday in November. The intent behind this campaign is to encourage individuals to quit smoking, or at least develop a plan to quit. Having this designated day allows individuals to feel that they are not alone on their quit journey as thousands of individuals across the country begin their journey on the same day. The **American Cancer Society** recognizes how difficult it can be to quit smoking, so a variety of tools and resources are available for individuals to access to help develop a plan to successfully attempt quitting.

Why does it matter?

Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. Although only about 12% of adults in the United States smoke cigarettes, this accounts for about 1 in 5 deaths each year. Quitting smoking can reduce your risk of getting cancer and can also improve your health immensely.

What can I do?

If you smoke cigarettes, consider setting your quit date on **November 21st** and join thousands of Americans in the **Great American Smokeout®**. If you aren't quite ready to quit, then consider making this date your "create a quit plan" date.

If you do not smoke but know of others who do, encourage them to think about participating in the **Great American Smokeout®**.

To increase your chance of quitting, read through a few tips that can help you be successful:

Set a Quit Date

If it's not November 21st, use this day to pick a quick date. When picking a quit date, be sure to select one that is within the next month. Setting it too far ahead could allow for too much time to change your mind. Once selected, make a strong commitment, and share with those around you! The more you verbalize your commitment with others, the higher chance you will follow through.

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Prepare for Your Quit Date

To help you be successful when your quit day arrives, prepare as much as possible. A few steps you can take include:

- Throw away all cigarettes and ashtrays.
- Identify your triggers or habits that have you craving a cigarette.
- Verbally practice saying no to cigarettes and repeat "I don't smoke anymore."
- Research if you will use Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs) or other medications to curb the craving.
- Develop a strong support system and continually communicate with them.
- Find a substitute, such as gum or toothpicks.
- Start cutting back the number of cigarettes you use, if you can.
- Talk with your primary care physician to help develop your plan.

On Your Quit Date

As mentioned above, come prepared with knowing what your triggers are and have a plan for when your habits trigger your craving. Replacing smoking with a healthier habit during triggering moments can help increase your chances of quitting. If you're feeling the urge to smoke, use the **4 D's**:

- **D**elay for 10 minutes.
- **D**eep breath in through your nose and exhale softly through your mouth.
- **D**rink water.
- **D**o something else and move your body.

If you find that you slip up, do not be discouraged. Most individuals have an average of 6 attempts before actually quitting, and others can take upwards of 30 attempts. Just remember that each time you quit, your chances of permanently quitting increase.

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