

Smokers Urged to Kick Bad Habit in the Butt

November 12 2007

More than 70 percent of all people who light cigarettes actually want to quit, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. However, only 5 percent to 10 percent are successful on any given attempt. As the Great American Smokeout rolls around again this year, a University of Missouri-Columbia respiratory therapist says there are more ways than ever to support smokers who want to kick the habit for good.

“There are so many reasons for people to get motivated to quit smoking,” said Shawna Strickland, clinical assistant professor and respiratory therapy program director in the MU School of Health Professions. “The health benefits actually start within minutes of quitting. The cost savings of no longer buying cigarettes can be tremendous, and by quitting, smokers are helping other people who are being harmed by their second-hand smoke.”

According to the American Cancer Society, heart rate and blood pressure drop just 20 minutes after kicking the habit. The blood’s carbon monoxide level returns to normal in just 12 hours. Circulation improves and lung function increases within three months. Within a year, coughing and shortness of breath decrease. The excess risk of coronary heart disease drops to half of that of someone who smokes. Five years after quitting, the risk of a stroke drops to the same risk level of a non-smoker.

“The Center for Disease Control and prevention cites that using approved drugs such as lozenges, patches, gum and prescription

medications, actually double a smoker's chance of quitting for good," Strickland said. "The best move is to talk to your primary care physician about a smoking cessation plan that will work for you. It has been reported that more than 25 percent of smokers who use medications can remain smoke free for more than six months."

The American Cancer Society, sponsor of the annual Great American Smokeout, lists step one as making the decision to quit followed by picking a day to stop. Be prepared for nicotine withdrawal and have plans in place to overcome the urges. Avoid temptation, change habits and delay for at least 10 minutes if the urge to smoke arises.

"Reward yourself for every little step," Strickland said. "Set aside some of the money you would have spent on cigarettes to buy yourself a weekly treat or save toward a larger item you have wanted."

This year The Great American Smokeout is Thursday, Nov. 15. To help, the American Cancer Society is offering "Quitline" for those who want to kick the habit. The supportive telephone counseling program is available 24 hours a day and smokers can [register online](#).

Source: University of Missouri

Citation: Smokers Urged to Kick Bad Habit in the Butt (2007, November 12) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-11-smokers-urged-bad-habit-butt.html>

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