

Here's your chance to stop smoking

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Join the Great American Smokeout Nov. 19.

(HealthDay)—Making the decision to quit smoking is the most important step in kicking the habit, and that's what smokers are being encouraged to do as part of the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout on Nov. 19.

About 68 percent of [smokers](#) want to quit—and 42 percent try every year. However, only 4 percent to 7 percent succeed on their own on any given attempt, the cancer society says. Medications help up to one-quarter of smokers who try to quit stay smoke-free for more than six months, and combining medication with counseling increases the chances of success.

"Some people are able to quit on their own, without the help of others or the use of medicines. For many though, it can be extremely hard to break not only the physical addiction, but also the social and [emotional ties](#) to smoking," Cliff Douglas, [vice president](#) for tobacco control, said

in a cancer society news release.

"The most important step is the first one: making the decision to quit. We hope the Great American Smokeout gives smokers an opportunity to consider making a lifesaving change," he added.

The event has been held the third Thursday in November every year since 1976.

Efforts to discourage smoking have led to a significant decline in [smoking rates](#) in the United States, from 42 percent of adults in 1965 to just under 15 percent by June of this year.

However, millions of American adults still smoke, and tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of death in the United States, causing nearly 20 percent of all deaths and at least 30 percent of all cancer deaths, according to the news release.

"The rapid drop in smoking rates over the past several decades was an enormous challenge, and represents a true public health victory. But reducing smoking among those who continue to smoke may be even a bigger challenge," Douglas said.

Research shows that smoking rates are higher among those with less education and those living below the poverty level. Also, about 40 percent of all cigarettes are smoked by adults with mental illness, the news release said.

More information: The American Cancer Society offers a [guide to quitting smoking](#).

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