

Tips on making the 'Great American Smokeout' work for you

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Start by smoking on a schedule, not at whim, expert says.

(HealthDay)—Thinking about quitting smoking? There are a number of things you can do to improve your chances, an expert says.

The tips offered by Dr. Gordon Strauss, a psychiatrist specializing in [smoking](#) cessation at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, might help you prepare for the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout on Nov. 19.

First, you need to change the way you smoke, Strauss said. Instead of smoking whenever you feel like it, start smoking on a regular schedule. This will help separate your smoking from its triggers, he explained.

Consider using approved anti-smoking medications, and get support from a "quit buddy" or an online group, he suggested.

"Stay away from smokers. Watching someone light up and inhaling [secondhand smoke](#) are triggers for most smokers. If you live with a smoker, let them know you are trying to quit smoking and negotiate some rules about where they will smoke, so that you can keep your distance," Strauss said in a hospital news release.

It's also important to manage stress by doing some stress-reducing activities every day, such as meditation, stretching or taking deep breaths. Stress is a major trigger for many smokers, he added.

Also, set a quit date and put it on your schedule so you can prepare for it. Get rid of smoking-related items such as ashtrays and lighters.

Decide on a mantra you can repeat to yourself when you're tempted by cigarettes, such as "I'm a nonsmoker" or "I want to live."

"Take care of yourself," Strauss said. "Part of many 12-step programs is the concept of 'HALT'—never let yourself get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired. This is just one quick way to remember to put your basic needs first. Don't use a cigarette as a substitute for tending to yourself."

If you don't succeed in quitting on your first few attempts, don't give up. Keep putting [quit](#) dates on your calendar and trying new approaches to quitting, he said.

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

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