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History of the Great American Smokeout Event

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What is the Great American Smokeout?

For more than 40 years, the American Cancer Society has hosted the Great American Smokeout on the third Thursday of November. The Great American Smokeout is an opportunity for people who smoke to commit to healthy, smoke-free lives – not just for a day, but year round. The Great American Smokeout provides an opportunity for individuals, community groups, businesses, health care providers, and others to encourage people to use the date to make a plan to quit, or plan in advance and initiate a smoking cessation plan on the day of the event. The Great American Smokeout event challenges people to stop smoking and helps people learn about the many tools they can use to help them quit and stay quit.

It's hard to quit tobacco

Addiction to nicotine in cigarettes is one of the strongest and most deadly addictions one can have. Quitting is hard for many people who smoke. It takes commitment and starts with a plan, often takes more than one quit attempt, and requires a lot of support. Often, the younger you were when you started to smoke, the more intense the addiction.

People who smoke are strongly advised to use proven cessation methods, such as

prescription medications and counseling, to quit smoking. It's a good idea to talk to your doctor or pharmacist to get their advice.

Research shows that people who smoke are most successful in their efforts to stop smoking when they have support, such as:

- Telephone quitlines
- American Cancer Society Freshstart Program
- Nicotine Anonymous meetings
- Self-help books and materials
- Smoking counselors or coaches
- Encouragement and support from friends and family members

Using 2 or more of these measures to quit smoking works better than using any one of them alone. For example, some people use a [prescription medicine](#)¹ along with [nicotine replacement](#)². Other people may use as many as 3 or 4 of the methods listed above. Professional guidance can help you choose the approach that's right for you.

The American Cancer Society can help

Quitting may not be easy, but you can do it and the American Cancer Society can help. The American Cancer Society is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide support, from questions about quitting smoking to looking for national or local resources to help you quit. To find out more, visit cancer.org/smokeout or call 1-800-227-2345.

How the Great American Smokeout began

The Great American Smokeout event has helped dramatically change Americans' attitudes about smoking. These changes have led to community programs and smoke-free laws that are now saving lives across the country. Annual Great American Smokeout events began in the 1970s, when smoking and secondhand smoke were common.

The idea for the Great American Smokeout grew from a 1970 event in Randolph, Massachusetts, at which Arthur P. Mullaney asked people to give up cigarettes for a day and donate the money they would have spent on cigarettes to a high school scholarship fund.

Then in 1974, Lynn R. Smith, editor of the *Monticello Times* in Minnesota, spearheaded the state's first D-Day, or Don't Smoke Day.

Visit www.cancer.org to learn more about quitting smoking, improving your health, or getting involved with the Great American Smokeout in your community. Or simply call the American Cancer Society any time at 1-800-227-2345.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco/guide-quitting-smoking/prescription-drugs-to-help-you-quit-smoking.html
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