The Great American Smokeout is November 20th

STRIVE TO BE SMOKE-FREE

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States – claiming more than 440,000 lives each year (over 7,000 in Wisconsin). That's more than the combined death rates for AIDS, drugs, alcohol, homicide, suicide and motor vehicle accidents. Additionally, 38,000 nonsmokers die as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke.

Seek Resources for Success

Half of all adult smokers today have quit; meaning millions of people have learned to face life without a cigarette. Yet, for those smokers who want to quit, less than 8% are able to do so without outside help.

While quitting smoking isn't easy, it is a fight you can win. You can improve your chances of being successful by using the many resources and support systems available. Counseling, nicotine replacement products, prescription medications that lessen cravings, telephone counseling such as the American Cancer Society Quitline Program, as well as support from family and friends are all proven ways to successfully improve your chances of quitting for good.

Nicotine Triggers

If you smoke within the first 15 minutes of waking up and still smoke even when you are sick in bed, it is very likely you have a strong need for nicotine because you have become dependent on or addicted to the drug. If you tend to light up only in certain situations or with specific people, such as when you are having a drink at a bar with friends, you are smoking out of habit. If you find that smoking helps you feel better when you're depressed or angry, you may have a physiological dependence.

Breaking these habits and addictions will require you to change your routine; avoid situations and people who influence your smoking; and learn different ways of coping with emotions such as stress, anger and depression.

The Way Through Withdrawal

If you need to break a dependence on nicotine, you will need to anticipate withdrawal symptoms. While many dread this aspect, withdrawal symptoms are a sign that your body is repairing itself and returning to good health. These symptoms are not the same for everyone and some smokers report no symptoms at all. Common symptoms include:

- Irritability
- Dizziness (in the first 1 or 2 days)
- Decreased concentration
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Increased appetite
- Trouble sleeping

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The best way to combat these symptoms is to focus on the positive and healthy steps you can take. Eat small, healthy meals to maintain a constant blood sugar level. (Sugary or spicy foods may trigger a desire to smoke, as will alcohol and coffee.) Get some exercise and incorporate new activities in your routine that will keep your body moving and your mind off of smoking. Better still, include a friend who will remind you of your commitment to live smoke-free when sudden cigarette cravings strike. If you need something to do with your hands, grab on to a substitute such as a pencil or a sugar-free lollipop!

Avoid Pitfalls

"Be prepared" isn't only a motto for the Scouts. To prevent a relapse, it is important to have a plan for times of high stress, boredom or loneliness. This plan should help you to identify triggers and the steps you can take to remain smoke-free.

Consider the following questions to help create your personal plan:

- What triggers must I avoid?
- What activities can I do to avoid smoking?
- When will I know it's time to ask for help?
- Who will I rely on for support?
- What are the reasons I do not want to return to smoking?

Studies show that, in the long run, smokers who quit feel better physically, mentally, and emotionally. Symmetry can help you by providing the information, intervention and support to help you quit – for good.

For more information or assistance with smoking cessation, contact SYMMETRY at (414) 256-4800 or (800) 236-7905 for confidential assistance.

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