

# Stopping Smoking Is Difficult But Rewarding

## Nov. 19 is the Great American Smokeout

By Jean Jeffers, Staff Writer

Stopping smoking is one of the best decisions anyone can make in a lifetime. Few other decisions compare with the gains and rewards and the health improvement the cessation of a smoking habit may have on you and those around you. The Great American Smokeout is coming up on Nov. 18. It is a great time to consider stopping smoking.

The smoking habit is likened to a heroin addiction in its veracity. Only 4 percent to 7 percent of people are able to quit smoking without medication or other aids, according to the American Cancer Society. Studies further indicate some 25 percent of smokers are able to quit with the aid

of medicines such as Zyban, Chantix and others for at least six months. Counseling may bring the success rate up, and behavioral and supportive therapies increase rates even further. This is all good news for the smoker who wants to quit.

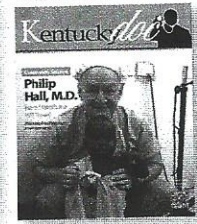
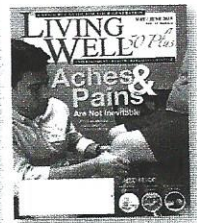
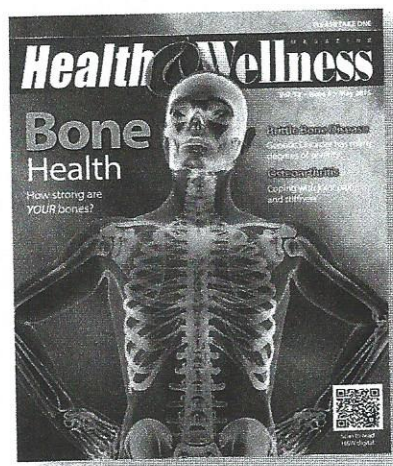
The American Cancer Association recommends having a plan in mind when you stop smoking. This may include:

1. Setting a quit date and on that date stop - no more cigarettes.
2. Planning for temptations and cravings. Know what kind of activity, such as knitting, you will do with your hands; use a swizzle stick, a cinnamon stick or sugarless hard candy

3. Avoiding natural triggers such as the desire to smoke with your morning coffee by changing your routine.
  4. Putting new habits in place, preferably ones that are healthy.
  5. Developing a group of friends who do not smoke.
  6. Getting support from family and friends but also from groups such as Nicotine Anonymous.
  7. Having a meaningful reason for wanting to stop smoking. The more meaningful and personal the reason, the better your resolve may be.
  8. Working with your cravings. When they come (and they will), seek out help. There are two kinds of cravings: physical cravings, which are strong at first and pass within two weeks or less (day three is the worst), and psychological cravings, which may last longer, up to a couple of months. And do not forget there will also be withdrawal symptoms. Be aware of what these symptoms may include.
  9. Eating well. Eat fresh fruit and vegetables. Many people worry about weight gain, and there may be some when you quit, but it is better to wait until after you stop smoking to worry about your weight.
- Smokeyfree.gov gives the following tips to boost your mood after quitting:
1. Stay active with moderate regu-

- lar exercise.
2. Structure each day and do things with other people.
  3. Continue doing what has been fun for you in the past.
  4. Talk with friends and loved ones.
- According to the American Cancer Society, stopping smoking has the following benefits:
- 20 minutes after quitting: Heart rate and blood pressure drop.
  - 12 hours after quitting: Carbon monoxide levels in blood drops.
  - Two weeks to three months after quitting: Lung function increases.
  - One to nine months after quitting: Coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
  - At the one-year mark: Coronary heart disease risk is reduced by half.
  - Five years later: Risk of some cancers is cut in half.
  - 10 years later: Mortality from lung cancer is cut in half.
  - 15 years later: Risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker.
- What are you waiting for? If you need some help getting started, check out the following national organizations:
- Nicotine Anonymous ([www.nicotine-anonymous.org](http://www.nicotine-anonymous.org))
  - QuitNet ([www.quitnet.com](http://www.quitnet.com))
  - The American Cancer Society (1-800-227-2345/[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org))

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