

Commit to quit

Join the Great American Smokeout on Nov. 15

Nov. 15 marks the 25th anniversary of the Great American Smokeout. Twenty-five years ago, the American Cancer Society began to challenge people to stop using tobacco by spotlighting the dangers of smoking.

Today, an estimated 47 million American adults smoke. Tobacco can cause a variety of cancers and contribute to such things as heart disease and respiratory disease. Each year, smoking is responsible for one in five deaths.

Quitting can significantly reduce the risk of developing lung cancer as well as other cancers. The risk of lung cancer is less in people who quit smoking than in people who continue to smoke the same number of cigarettes per day. The risk of lung cancer also decreases as the number of years since quitting increases.

A host of immediate and long-term benefits are associated with smoking cessation. A few benefits are described below.

- **20 minutes after quitting** — Your blood pressure drops to a level close to that before the last cigarette. The temperature of your hands and feet increases to normal.
- **8 hours after quitting** — The carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
- **24 hours after quitting** — Your chance of a heart attack decreases.
- **2 to 3 weeks after quitting** — Your circulation improves and your lung function increases as much as 30 percent.
- **1 to 9 months after quitting** — Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue and shortness of breath decrease. Cilia (the tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) regain normal function in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs and reduce infection.
- **1 year after quitting** — The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's risk.
- **5 years after quitting** — Your risk of stroke is reduced to that of a non-smoker.
- **10 years after quitting** — The lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker's rate. The risk of oral, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney and pancreatic cancer decreases.
- **15 years after quitting** — The risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker's risk.

If you are one of the 47 million Americans who currently smoke, join in and make Nov. 15 your official "Commit to Quit" date.

For additional information on smoking cessation, contact Hanford Environmental Health Foundation's Health Education Services office at 373-3729. ♦

