THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT IS NOVEMBER 16TH

November 16, 2014 is the Great American Smokeout. Surveys suggest that as many as 80% of smokers are thinking about quitting, but believe it may be too difficult or too late.

WHY QUIT?

In the United States, smoking is responsible for nearly 1 in 5 deaths. Another 16 million suffer from a smoking-related disease. The U.S. Surgeon General states, “Smoking cessation represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives.”

It doesn’t matter how long you’ve been smoking. There are still benefits to quitting. Those who stop smoking before age 50 cut their risk in half of dying in the next 15 years, compared to those who continue to smoke.

Quitters of every age and smoking history enjoy a better quality of life including fewer illnesses like colds and the flu, lower rates of bronchitis, and better mood than their smoking counterparts.

Health benefits exist even if you have a smoking-related disease like Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or emphysema. Quitters have lower risks of lung cancer, other cancers, heart attacks, stroke and chronic heart disease. Women who quit before they become pregnant or in the first trimester decrease their risk of having a low birth-weight baby.

QUITTER’S TOOLBOX

Support Programs
All 50 states offer free, telephone-based programs where trained counselors take smoker’s calls. Those who use telephonic counseling enjoy twice the success rate of those who do not. Call the quit line at 1-800-QUIT-NOW (784-8669).

Support Groups
Nicotine Anonymous and other area support groups offer in-person, group support for those looking to quit and stay quit. Like those who utilize telephonic support, group support increases your chances of quitting.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy
For most people, smoking becomes both a physical and psychological habit. Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) addresses the physical withdrawals of nicotine and can help you focus on breaking the psychological and habitual aspects of smoking. The FDA has approved five forms of NRT: the patch, gum, nasal spray, inhalers, and lozenges. Consider what method best suits your lifestyle. Discuss your options with your doctor.

Prescription Drugs
Bupropion (Zyban, Wellbutrin, Aplenzin)
These extended release antidepressants can help reduce the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.
Varenidine (Chantix)
This medication works by interacting with the nicotine receptors in the brain. It both lessens the pleasure of smoking and reduces the symptoms of nicotine withdrawal.

**BENEFITS OVER TIME**
- 20 minutes after quitting, your heart rate drops.
- 12 hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide levels in your blood drop to normal.
- 2-3 months after quitting, your risk of a heart attack begins to drop. Your lung function begins to improve.
- 1-9 months after quitting, your coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
- 1 year after quitting, your added risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.
- 5 years after quitting, your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker's.
- 10 years after quitting, your lung cancer death rate is about half that of a smoker's.
- 15 years after quitting, your risk of coronary heart disease is back to that of a nonsmoker.

**WHAT ABOUT ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES?**
The electronic cigarette, commonly referred to as an e-cigarette, is sold with cartridges of nicotine and flavorings. They are not approved by the FDA to help people quit smoking or to serve as a safer alternative to smoking. Questions remain about their safety and there are not yet adequate studies to show that they help people reduce or quit smoking.

**PLAN FOR SUCCESS**
1. Make the decision to quit.
2. Set a quit day and make a plan.
3. Have a conversation with your doctor to minimize the symptoms of withdrawal.
4. Stay tobacco-free – anticipate challenges and plan for them.