



The Great American Smoke-Out

What is the Great American Smoke-out?

The Great American Smoke-out is a nationwide event sponsored by the American Cancer Society. Held on the third Thursday of November, it is a day where smokers are asked to put down their cigarettes, cigars, spit tobacco, or any tobacco product and prove to themselves that they really can live without them for one day.

Why do we have it?

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, "cigarette smoking is the major single cause of cancer mortality in the United States." In Michigan, cigarette smoking and secondhand smoke are the two leading causes of preventable death. In Berrien County in 2008, 18.6% of the population smoked, which is well less than 26% of the population that smoked in 2005. "If we can get people to stop smoking just for one day, then hopefully they will have a chance to see that it really is worth a try to remain

tobacco-free for life", stated Kerri Teachout, Prevention Supervisor at Berrien County Health Department.



What does it take to participate?

Just you. There is nothing to join or buy or sign up for. You simply commit to quit for one day. If you are not a smoker but want to be involved, you could help a family member or friend with their commitment or you can be part of the local efforts to advocate smoke free environments.

How you can begin to quit ?

The first step is to make a decision that you want to quit. Know why you are quitting so that you have an 'end-goal'. Is it to improve health? Save money? Improve your love life?

The next step is to get ready. Prepare for your quit; decide what day you will quit. The Great American Smokeout Day is a perfect time to quit as lots of other people are doing the same thing, plus there is never a better time when you have an entire nation supporting your decision. Did you know that more Americans try to quit smoking on this day than any other day of the year, including New Year's Eve?

Next, decide on a method you will use to help you quit. Will it be cold-turkey, nicotine patches, medication, counseling, smoking cessation classes or some other way?

Health benefits of quitting smoking over time

- 20 minutes after quitting: your heart rate and blood pressure drops
- 12 hours after quitting: the carbon monoxide in your blood drops to normal
- 2 weeks to 3 months after quitting: your circulation improves and your lung function increases
- 1 to 9 months after quitting: coughing and shortness of breath decrease; cilia (tiny hair-like structures that move mucus out of the lungs) regain normal func-

tion in the lungs, increasing the ability to handle mucus, clean the lungs, and reduce the risk of infection.

- 1 year after quitting: the excess 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 non-smoker 5 to 15 years after quitting

- 10 years after quitting: the lung cancer death rate is about half that of a continuing smoker's. The risk of cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, cervix, and pancreas decrease
- 15 years after quitting: the risk of coronary heart disease is that of a non-smoker's.

(American Cancer Society http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/ped_10_3.asp)

Special thanks to Kerri Teachout, Prevention Supervisor, for her help with this article!

The Berrien County Health Department has four locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor

769 Pipestone
P.O. Box 706
926-7121

M-139 Office
2106 S. M-139
927-5623

Niles

1205 N. Front St.
684-2800

Three Oaks

21 N. Elm
756-2008

Or visit us on the web at www.bchdmi.org

Berrien County Health

Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the
Community.



How to stay smoke-free after you quit:

- Stay away from other smokers, especially in the early stages of quitting.
- Discard all your cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays. Remove the temptations.
- Stay out of the places where you commonly purchased cigarettes.
- When the craving to smoke hits, distract yourself—take a deep breath, drink some water, go for a short walk or call a friend instead are some suggestions.
- Exercise. It not only relieves stress but you will also begin to improve your health.
- Plan rewards for yourself. Kicking the habit of smoking **IS** a big deal and anyone who does it deserves a big reward. The money you save by not smoking can be an incentive to do something nice for yourself!



The Berrien County Health Department has a variety of cessation resources available for you to get started or even to help someone you love get started on the journey of living tobacco free. Smoking Cessation classes are also available and are taught by Certified American Lung Association facilitators. For more information, call Berrien County Health Department at: **927-5622**

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