



The Great American Smoke-Out



According to the most recent Behavioral Risk Factor Survey done in 2008, less than 19% of Berrien County residents are current smokers (down from 26% in 2005), over 26% used to smoke but have quit, and over 55% have never smoked.

The good news is that less people smoke each year, and there are more people who have quit than who currently

smoke! However, for those who still do smoke (and those who are near them when they smoke), there are grave health dangers, including lung cancer. For example, in 2008, 155 people in Berrien County were diagnosed with lung cancer and 128 died of it. **Each year, lung cancer kills more people than breast, prostate, colon and pancreas cancers combined.**

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. This year, the Great American Smoke-Out is on November 18th.

I've smoked for so long, what's the point of quitting now?

Time since Quitting	Health Benefit
20 minutes	Your heart rate and blood pressure drop closer to normal
12 hours	The carbon monoxide in your blood drops to normal
2 weeks – 3 months	Your circulation improves and your lung function increases
1 month – 9 months	Coughing and shortness of breath decrease, cilia that move mucus out of your lungs regain normal function so that your lungs can clear easier which reduces the risk of infection
1 year	The excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's
5 years – 15 years	Your risk of having a stroke is reduced to that of a non-smoker
10 years	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 all decrease.
15 years	The risk of coronary heart disease is the same as a nonsmoker's.

I know smoking is bad for me but I can't seem to quit.

Quitting smoking is very difficult because the nicotine in cigarettes is extremely addictive. Addiction to smoking is both physical and mental. To successfully quit it is important to have a plan and have support.

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 Smoke-out 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 Americans try to quit smoking on this day than any other day of the year, including New Year's?



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 another way?

When you first quit, you should stay away from other smokers and from places where you were used to buying cigarettes to remove those temptations. Also, throw away all your cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays. 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. Exercise is a very helpful distraction and also relieves stress.

Quitting is not something you have to do alone. The health department has a list of resources that can provide assistance. Call 927-5668 for more information or visit bctrc.org.



For more information, contact the health department at (269) 926-7121 or visit our website at www.bchdmi.org