



The Great American Smokeout

The Smokeout is always the third Thursday of November, one week before Thanksgiving.

This year (2007), the Smokeout is November 15th.

Could This Be the First Day of a Life Without Tobacco?

Are you thinking about quitting smoking but not sure you're ready to take the plunge? Maybe the Great American Smokeout is for you. It's an opportunity to join with literally millions of other smokers in saying "no thanks" to cigarettes for 24 hours.

A Day to "Butt Out"

The Great American Smokeout traditionally takes place on the third Thursday in November. The concept dates from the early '70s when Lynn Smith, publisher of the *Monticello Times* of Minnesota, announced the first observance and called it "D Day." The idea caught on in state after state until in 1977, it went nationwide under the sponsorship of the American Cancer Society. If past Smokeouts are any indication, as many as one-third of the nation's 46 million smokers could be taking the day off from smoking.

Joining the Fun

Each year during the Great American Smokeout, the American Cancer Society promotes local and nationwide activities that focus in a light-hearted way on the benefits of not smoking. Here are some previous years' activities:

- A national sandwich shop company gave out free "cold turkey" sandwiches and cookies to smokers who turned in at least a half pack of cigarettes.
- Newborn babies at Washington's Columbia Hospital received T-shirts that said "I'm a Born Nonsmoker."
- "Don't Let Smoking Be an Obstacle" was the slogan for a Houston activity in which smokers ran an obstacle course consisting of oversized cigarette packs, matches and ashtrays.
- Preschoolers in Texas played "Gonesmoke, a Tale of the New West," wearing red bandannas and Smokeout deputy badges.
- Other events include public appearances by celebrities who have quit, parades, rallies, athletic events and ceremonial cigarette burials and bonfires.

Making It Work

Behind the festivities of the Great American Smokeout are the serious efforts of thousands of hard-working American Cancer Society volunteers who visit schools, malls and workplaces to publicize the events and distribute information about quitting. They also enlist nonsmokers to "adopt" smokers for the day, supporting them with advice and snacks. The support continues for those who decide not to return to smoking after the Great American Smokeout is over.

The Rules of the Game

The rules are simple: You just quit smoking for the 24 hours of the Smokeout. The wonderful thing is that you won't be alone; you can swap advice, jokes and groans with the other "quitters," nonsmokers and the American Cancer Society volunteers who will be cheering you on. Even if you don't go on to quit permanently, you will have learned that you can quit for a day and that many others around you are taking the step, too. Contact the American Cancer Society for information on how you can participate, either as a "quitter" or as a volunteer.

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