

# Wellness Ways

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## *Don't Kick Butt Alone*

Resources abound and surrounding yourself with helpful tools is essential to success. One helpful Web site offers a library of information to help find the individualized program that can help make quitting your next success story. QUITNET.com lists dozens of ways to fight the habit, including a list of links with reference materials in both English and Spanish.

Check out [www.quitnet.com/library/links.jtml](http://www.quitnet.com/library/links.jtml) for ideas on where to start. Resources include a consumer's guide to quitting smoking, research reports, the problems and health risks of second-hand smoke, legislative initiatives and more.

Methodist Wellness Services also provides individual consultations with expert behaviorists to help clients committed to quitting their habits.

## *Methodist Wellness Services: Working For YOU*

Whether it's your first time to quit or you've lost count of the attempts, Methodist Wellness Services offers **Smoking Cessation Programs** that can help make it happen. Giving up an unhealthy habit is like starting over, and Methodist's clinical psychologists, registered nurses, exercise physiologists, physicians and other Wellness staff are experts in providing the necessary support, information and education to make this Kick the Butt effort a success. Smoking cessation help is available to corporations, and Methodist Wellness behaviorists also are available for individual consultations with clients. Check the Methodist Wellness Web site for more information or to register for a program ([www.methodistwellness.com](http://www.methodistwellness.com)). There's no time like now to give up smoking.

## *Make This Great American Smokeout Your Last*

For more than 32 years, American smokers have been asked to give up their vice for one day in November. The Great American Smokeout became official in 1977 but stems from a handful of earlier efforts by individual cities. This year, Thursday, Nov. 20, is the official Great American Smokeout for 2008.

The psychology behind GASO – Americans love our acronyms – is that smokers who quit for one day may be encouraged to quit for life. Those of us who are reformed smokers know this is easier said than done.

Today, smokers have more options than ever before to help themselves and those around them to healthier lives. The Internet abounds with programs, from drugs and analysis to yoga and hypnosis. United States health organizations publish brochures and helpful tips to kick the habit. But like the old saying goes, “you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.”



Smokers' best motivation to give up cigarettes and tobacco products remains its threat to human life. In the early 1930s, The Methodist Hospital's Dr. Michael E. DeBakey (died July 11, 2008, at age 99) and his mentor, Dr. Alton Oschner, were among the first physicians to warn of the dangers of smoking. Already, they had established a link between smoking cigarettes and lung cancer.

Since those early warnings, researchers have linked a host of deadly diseases to smoking, and, despite seven decades of science, tobacco use leads the way in preventable, controllable U.S. deaths. Each year, cigarette smoking is blamed for approximately 438,000 deaths, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Many of the non-smoking victims will die because of second-hand smoke.

**CANCER:** Lung cancer and chronic lung diseases like bronchitis, emphysema and chronic airways obstruction go hand-in-hand with tobacco use. An American man who smokes is 22 times more likely to die from lung cancer than a non-smoker. Women who smoke are 12 times more likely to die of the disease than their non-smoking equals. Smoking is responsible for 80 to 90 percent of all lung cancer deaths in America.

# Make This Great American Smokeout Your Last

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But smoking does not limit itself to lung cancer. Cancers of the bladder, voice box, oral cavity, esophagus, cervix, kidney, pancreas, stomach and other organs can be traced to smoking. The

CDC's Fact Sheet on Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking – [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/health\\_effects.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/health_effects.htm) – says smoking harms nearly every organ of the body.

**CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE:** Cigarette smokers double their risk of developing coronary heart disease, America's leading cause of death, and stroke. Smoking also reduces circulation and can lead to peripheral vascular disease and abdominal aortic aneurysms.

**CHILDBIRTH PROBLEMS:** Cigarette smoking is linked to infertility, preterm delivery, stillbirth, low birth weight babies and sudden infant death syndrome.

**BONE HEALTH:** American women smokers have lower bone density than non-smokers and an increased risk for hip fractures, according to a 2001 U.S. Surgeon General's report.

By no means is the above a complete list of the negative health effects of cigarette smoking and tobacco use. It only touches on the major diseases linked to smoking. November 20 is the Great American Smokeout, but any day of the year can be your last day to smoke and the beginning of a move to healthier living.

***Smoking is a health risk totally within your control.***

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## Benefits of Quitting

Imagine the lungs of a longtime smoker. They are cloudy, dark and ugly. Like the bare surface of the moon, the tissue appears spongy, sickly.



Contrast this with a second visualization. Imagine those same lungs a few months after the smoker quits. These lungs are pink with healthy blood flow. The tissue has a vibrant look – a look of life. These lungs have no resemblance to those barren moon rocks the smoker used for lungs.



Visualization is a great thing. Twenty-five years ago, this psychological mind game – visualizing healing lungs – helped me break a 10-year smoking addiction.

No matter how many years you smoke, no matter how many times you quit, the healing begins immediately. Our bodies are resilient and take a lot of abuse. But they respond like well-groomed flowers when they get a little loving care.

Just 20 minutes after that final cigarette, the heart rate drops, according to a 2004 U.S. Surgeon General's report. As the pulse drops, blood pressure decreases and the body temperature of the hands and feet rises. Only 12 hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide level in the reformed smoker's blood drops to normal as the oxygen level increases to normal. Already the body is bouncing back, eager to rid itself of cigarettes' deadly chemicals and toxins.

Two weeks to three months after quitting, a former smoker's risk of heart attack begins to drop. Within 15 years of a reformed smoker's last cigarette, the risk of coronary heart disease is the same as that of a non-smoker. Also within three months, reformed smokers will notice their senses of smell and taste improving. They won't notice that damaged nerve endings also have begun to grow back.

As the months pass, healing continues with improved lung function and decreased risk of cancer, stroke and other smoking-related diseases. Walking and exercise become easier. And this ability to move the body can help with some of the nicotine withdrawal symptoms, such as anxiety, increased appetite, difficulty focusing and irritability.

Make no mistake: nicotine is a drug as powerful as illegal drugs like cocaine and heroin. Kicking the habit may require intervention and several attempts. Join a support group, research the Internet – find the program that works for you. Because the minute you start the process, your new life as a healthier person begins.