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Quit like a champ! How to beat tobacco once and for all

Written by [Marci Allen](#) from the National YMCA on 11/16/2015 1:00 PM

Get ready to lose the habit, and become victorious over tobacco! **The American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout** event is your chance to triumph over addiction. Every November, the third Thursday is dedicated to encouraging smokers to go the distance, and to finally give up smoking.

According to the American Cancer Society, "about 42 million Americans still smoke cigarettes, and tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States. As of 2013, there were also 12.4 million cigar smokers in the US, and over 2.3 million who smoke tobacco in pipes — other dangerous and addictive forms of tobacco."¹

By quitting (even if it's only for one day) you'll be taking an important step toward a healthier life—one that can lead to reducing your cancer risk. It's a race for your health, and it starts today.

History of the Smokeout

In 1971, a high school guidance counselor in Massachusetts asked people to quit smoking for one day. He also asked them to donate the money they saved on cigarettes that day to a local college scholarship fund. In time, that small-town event grew into what is now one of the most successful one-day quit programs in the country. More people quit on this day than any other time of the year, including New Year's Day. And you could be one of them.

Whether you're just thinking about kicking the habit, or you're ready to choose a quit date, there's no better time than **this Thursday, November 19, 2015** to join smokers across the country for the Great American Smokeout.

MERIDEN YMCA

110 West Main Street Meriden, CT 06451

P 203 235 6386 **F** 203 634 6517 www.meridenymca.org

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Tips to win at quitting smoking

Here are some more tips if you're ready to quit:

Set a date for quitting. Take one day at a time, and set short-term goals.

Tell your family and friends about your plans. You will need their encouragement when you feel the urge to light up. Having social support is one of the keys to quitting successfully.

To avoid temptation, get rid of all cigarettes, lighters and ashtrays.

Talk to your doctor about using a medication or nicotine replacement therapy as an alternative to quitting "cold turkey."

When you first try to quit, change your routine. If you usually light up during your morning coffee, then eat breakfast in a different place or drink tea instead of coffee.

When you quit and still get the urge to smoke, talk with someone, go for a walk, drink water or get busy with a task. Reduce your stress by taking a hot bath, exercising or reading a book.

Get help and personal support with a quitting cessation program. The American Cancer Society offers Quitline for those who are trying to stop smoking, or check with your medical insurance provider for programs.** Using programs with personal support can more than double your chances of quitting successfully.

Lastly, take advantage of the **Great American Smokeout**. You'll be surprised at how quickly your body starts to recover when you don't smoke. For instance, 20 minutes after your last cigarette, your blood pressure will go down toward your baseline level and your heart rate will become slower. After 12 hours, the carbon monoxide levels in your lungs will return to normal. And that's just in the first day!

Even if you're not ready to quit just yet, joining the Great American Smokeout will teach you that you can go a day without cigarettes. And maybe even a lifetime!

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