

Southeast Health District

"Keeping Communities Safe and Healthy"

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NEWS RELEASE

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It's quitting time: *Ways to kick the tobacco habit*

Quitting time is here. At least it is for tobacco users. As Georgians head into the holiday season, it is a good time for smokers and other tobacco users to begin thinking about kicking the habit.

The American Cancer Society's annual Great American Smokeout was Thursday, Nov. 20. The Southeast Health District and your local health department would like to encourage all tobacco users to consider making an attempt to quit in the coming weeks and months. Quitting tobacco can be a difficult thing to do, but it is one of the best decisions a person can make for their overall health and wellness.

Tobacco is the number one cause of preventable death in the United States. Secondhand smoke exposure is the number three cause of preventable death as well (alcohol use is number two). Tobacco users are at a major risk of heart disease and cancers of the lung, larynx, oral cavity, throat, esophagus, bladder, pancreas, liver, uterine cervix, kidney, stomach, colon, rectum and some leukemia. Bronchitis, emphysema and stroke can also be a result of tobacco use.

Smoking causes about 87 percent of all lung cancer cases in Georgia and 82 percent of all lung cancer deaths.

"There are several ways to quit using tobacco," says Anne Wheeler, coordinator of the Southeast Health District Office of Health Promotion. "People are different, and what works for one person may not work for another."

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Appling
Atkinson
Bacon
Brantley

Bulloch
Candler
Charlton
Clinch

Coffee
Evans
Jeff Davis
Pierce

Tattnall
Toombs
Ware
Wayne

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Wheeler offers a few proven ways to quit using tobacco:

- **Go “cold turkey.”** Quitting tobacco use all at once. Positives: This option requires very little pre-planning time, and some smokers find that they get over withdrawal symptoms more quickly. Potential drawbacks: This option may include a strong urge to smoke or chew for the first few days after quitting and severe withdrawal symptoms such as headaches or anxiety.
- **Slowly but surely wins the race.** Slowly reduce the level of smoking and the amount of nicotine. Over time, the body gets used to having less nicotine and eventually a smoker is prepared to quit completely. While this method takes longer, some smokers report having an easier time kicking the habit.
- **Chew on this.** Chewing gum can replace cigarettes, cigars, pipes or spit tobacco and help smokers reduce their nicotine intake. Other alternative chewing items include sunflower or pumpkin seeds, toothpicks, coffee stirrers, beef jerky, a bottle of water or hard candy.
- **Doctor’s orders.** Nicotine patches, nicotine gum and pills may help reduce urges to smoke and curb withdrawal symptoms. Call your doctor if you are considering any of these options. Prescriptions are required for some of the items. Your physician also can discuss which products are best for you.
- **Call the Georgia Tobacco Use Quit Line at 1-877-270-STOP.** The Quit Line is a free resource for Georgians who desire to quit tobacco. In addition to being free, it is also completely confidential. When a caller dials the Quit Line, he or she receives screening, counseling, a referral to resources in their community and a customized “quit kit” based on a caller’s particular needs. Materials are also offered in Spanish. The Quit Line is also a great resource for non-tobacco users who want to help a loved one quit. The Quit Line offers effective techniques for quitting all types of tobacco.

Usually, a combination of two or more of these methods works best. One thing to remember is to let your friends and family know your intentions to quit. Having people around you to support you increases your chances of having a successful quit attempt by a huge margin.

“We like to say that quitting takes practice,” Wheeler says. “It often takes a person more than one quit attempt to stop for good, and every attempt to quit is a good one.”

For more information on tobacco cessation, the Quit Line or local resources in your community, contact your local health department.