

Lee County Health Department

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IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO QUIT

By the time you read this, the Great American Smokeout for 2005 will have come and gone. If you are a smoker – did you give quitting a try? The third Thursday of November each year is designated as the Great American Smokeout. The purpose of the event is to ask smokers to quit for this one day. If you are successful, perhaps you could do it another day, and so on and so on. Sometimes smokers trying to quit become overwhelmed when they think about quitting forever. Taking one day at a time may be more comfortable for you.

Quitting smoking can be one of the most difficult things you ever do, but also one of the most rewarding in terms of physical, social and financial aspects. Some people can simply quit “cold turkey”; others may need emotional and/or pharmacological assistance. Some people are successful with their first attempt; others may need several attempts before quitting for good. I urge those of you who have quit smoking and started again not to think of your relapse as a failure – but as one step closer to quitting for good. You’ve proven to yourself that you can do it and you can do it again. Perhaps you are one of those people who need several attempts to make it stick, or perhaps a different method of quitting will work better. The key is to not give up!

The vast majority of smokers say they wish they could quit. Everyone is aware of the numerous diseases smoking can cause (although some people are experts at denial). Just a few of the many benefits of quitting include: feeling better; reducing your risk of illness; not exposing your family or friends to deadly second-hand smoke; less inconvenience (like running to the gas station on a cold winter night just for a pack of cigarettes); saving money (have you totaled the dollar amount per week, month or year lately?); your food tasting better; your clothes, hands and breath not smelling like smoke; and one of my favorites – not lining the pockets of those tobacco company executives. I’m talking about the companies that for years denied the health risks of tobacco and the fact that nicotine is addictive, even though they were fully aware of the research and who now deny that they market their product to kids. Yeah, right.

There are many items, over the counter, available for your assistance in quitting smoking. You can also talk to your doctor about medications that may help. The Lee County Health Department will be offering a smoking cessation clinic next spring. Freedom From Smoking, an 8 week series of classes will be offered to residents wishing to quit. Watch this paper for details as they become available. If a group setting isn’t for you, the Freedom From Smoking class is available online through the American Lung Association at www.lungusa.org. Finally, the Illinois Tobacco Quitline offers information, tips and support for quitting – call 1-866-QUIT-YES.

Help is available – take advantage of it. I wish you all the luck in the world as you take this step. For you, for those you love – now is the time.

-Submitted by Cathy Ferguson, MPH, Public Health Administrator