

Whether thinking about quitting smoking or taking the steps to quit, please join Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department in kicking the tobacco habit by participating in the Great American SmokeOut on Nov. 18.

“This is an opportunity for not just smokers but spit tobacco users in the eight county area to quit the habit and participate in a nationwide event,” said Billie Cole, Health Educator for Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department. “Not only will we be supporting the movement here in Southwest Nebraska but we will be joining millions of others who will forgo cigarettes (tobacco) for 24 hours.”

To bring more awareness and participation in the event, SWNPHD is giving an incentive to encourage more tobacco users to take those first steps in quitting.

All tobacco users residing in the eight county health district who quit tobacco for the 24 hours will be eligible to win a \$100 Visa gift card plus other prizes.

Those wanting to participate in the Smokeout can sign up by emailing SWNPHD at info@swhealthdept.com or calling 308-345-4223.

Registrations must be received by Nov. 16. Participants will receive a newsletter giving tips on how to celebrate the day, quitting for good and other ideas and tools.

“We hope to have a record turnout and hopefully this will be an anniversary date for many to celebrate next year,” said Cole.

Rules for the Great American Smokeout event: You must quit smoking for the 24 hours of the Smokeout. 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.

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 and 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.

Tips to Quit Tobacco

Quitting tobacco is not easy, and some people try several times before succeeding. The American Cancer Society believes there is no single best way, and tobacco users should try several methods to quit.

These can include: step-by-step manuals, self-help classes or counseling, toll-free telephone based counseling programs, and/or using medication.

Tobacco users may also need to make changes in their routines to help them break their tobacco habits. Below are some tips to help tobacco users in their quit attempt:

- Remove all tobacco-related materials (ashtrays, matches, chew cans, etc.) from your home, car, and office—it will help avoid temptation.
- Tobacco urges are worst in the first two weeks. They can last a few minutes at most, so practice the four Ds:

1. Deep breaths

2. Do something else to get your mind off the craving (call a friend, go for a walk, chew gum, etc)

3. Drink lots of water throughout the day

4. Delay reaching for a cigarette or chew; the urge will pass

Other suggestions include:

- Avoiding situations that encourage smoking or chewing.
- Changing your routines. If you always light-up when you have a coffee – drink tea or juice instead.

How To Quit

There is help for Nebraska residents of all ages who want to quit. The Nebraska Tobacco Quit Line telephone coaches help callers quit smoking or chewing tobacco.

Quit coaches work with each individual caller to develop a plan for when and how to quit tobacco use.

Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW to access the Nebraska Tobacco Quit Line

Think about why quitting is important and stay focused on that. Quitting is a lot easier if a smoker is working towards a goal. What is a good reason for quitting tobacco today?

For additional tips and support on quitting smoking or spit tobacco, contact Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department at 308-345-4223 or visit the website at www.swhealthdept.com.

SWNPHD provides Quit Spit Kits and Quit Smoking Kits to all residents. They are available at a physician or dentist office, pharmacy, and at the McCook office.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Perkins and Red Willow counties.