

## Fall 2005 Wellness Article

### *Great American Smokeout®*

**A**llegedly, in South Bend, Indiana, monkeys are banned by law from smoking cigarettes.

Humans, however, have every right to do so. Forty-six million Americans are smokers who, on average, will lose between thirteen and fourteen years of their lives to the habit.<sup>1</sup> We've all heard the statistics that smoking is a major cause of serious health problems. These include everything from aneurysms, emphysema, and stroke to cataracts, bone thinning and hip fractures. Still, there remain smokers who continue to light up year after year, proving that our addictions do not always respond to logical thinking.

To combat this problem, the American Cancer Society has been sponsoring the nationwide Great American Smokeout® since 1977. The program has a history of helping people fight even the most stubborn addictions. With the help of certain state and local bans on smoking in public areas, fewer people are smoking and, as a result, fewer people are developing cancer and other related illnesses.

The Great American Smokeout® takes place on November 17 this year. The American Cancer Society asks people across the country to quit smoking on this day, hopefully as a first step to quitting for good. While one day may not seem like an accomplishment to some people, consider what happens to your body after eliminating cigarettes for just 24 hours:

- Blood Pressure Drops to Normal
- Carbon Monoxide Level in Blood Returns to Normal
- Blood Oxygen Level Returns to Normal
- Chance of Heart Attack Decreases

It's not unusual for a person to try quitting several times before they finally achieve the change permanently. Based on these statistics, even if your choice to quit does not last very long, you will still benefit greatly. Within three months, even lung function increases up to 30 percent.

While quitting cold turkey is always an option, research suggests that using additional forms of support increases your chances tremendously. These could include nicotine replacements, support groups, or guide books. Due to the loss of productivity, many companies are sponsoring smoking cessation programs such as Free & Clear ([www.freeclear.com](http://www.freeclear.com)) as a treatment provider to their employees.

If you or a loved one are currently smoking, or have successfully won the battle against it, consider spreading the word about the Great American Smokeout® and helping somebody else to win their own battle. Quitting with someone gives you added support from someone experiencing the same desires and moods as yourself. For more information and additional resources, visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org), or [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov).

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<sup>1</sup> Based on CDC data collected from 1995 to 1999