

NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: Karrey Britt
Communications Coordinator
Office: (785) 856-7362

Health Department encourages smokers to participate in Great American Smokeout, Nov. 20

(Lawrence, KS) – The Lawrence-Douglas County Health Department encourages people to quit smoking as part of the American Cancer Society Great American Smokeout on Thursday, Nov. 20.

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the U.S. and Kansas. Each year, nearly 3,900 adult Kansans die from their own smoking and an additional 380 nonsmokers die from exposure to secondhand smoke. Despite these risks, smoking is still a common practice. In Douglas County, one in five individuals identified themselves as a current smoker in 2011.

Unfortunately, quitting is hard. “Most smokers want to quit. It’s just really difficult for them to do because nicotine, a drug found naturally in tobacco, is very addictive. It’s as addictive as heroin, cocaine and alcohol,” Community Health Planner Charlie Bryan said. Many tobacco users also try approaches that aren’t effective. One in five adults who made a quit attempt in the past 12 months used products that have not been proven to be effective, such as smokeless tobacco and e-cigarettes.

The Health Department encourages smokers to talk to their doctor, employer or a quitline coach because they will be more successful at quitting. “Don’t go cold turkey, get help,” Community Health Planner Charlie Bryan said. “Get a coach, get medicine and don’t give up. It takes most smokers multiple attempts to quit, so if you fail, try, try again,” he said. Tobacco users who receive quitline services are 60 percent more likely to successfully quit compared to those who attempt to quit without assistance. Additionally, tobacco users who receive medications and quitline counseling have a 30 percent greater chance of quitting compared to using medications alone.

Kansas Tobacco Quitline coaches at www.KSquit.org or 1-800-QUIT-Now (784-8669) are ready to help Kansans quit tobacco. The quitline is a service provided at no cost to Kansans and enrollment is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week online or by phone. A quit coach works with the tobacco user through one-on-one online chats, emails or phone calls to prepare for a quit date, and create a plan to fight challenges.

The Lawrence-Douglas Health Department also has an in-person quit coach, Alisha Fisher, who is ready to help smokers identify potential roadblocks and then assist them in making a quit plan that fits their needs. The service is provided at no cost. To schedule a consultation, contact Fisher at afisher@ldchealth.org or 843-0721.