

NEWS RELEASE
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Health Department encourages smokers to participate in Great American Smokeout, Nov. 19

(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. 19.

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States. Cigarette smoking is responsible for more than 480,000 deaths annually, including nearly 42,000 deaths resulting from secondhand smoke exposure, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For every person who dies because of smoking, at least 30 live with a serious smoking-related illness such as lung disease or heart disease. Despite these risks, smoking is still common practice. In Douglas County, 1 in 7 individuals identified themselves as a current smoker in 2013, according to the Kansas Behavior Risk Factor Surveillance System.

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. In 2014, nearly 3 out of 5 adult smokers in Kansas tried to quit at least once.

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,” 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. Free phone counseling and self-help materials are available seven days a week, 24 hours a day from a Quit coach who specializes in helping people quit using tobacco. The Quitline’s online program is also available, which includes a Web coach and a private online community where participants can watch videos, complete activities and join in discussions with others in the program. Additionally, the Quitline’s Text2Quit services allows individuals to connect with their Quit coaches, use the Web coach services and keep on track with their quit plan from their cell phones.