

SMOKERS AND VAPERS: IT'S TIME FOR A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

About 32.4 million Americans are smokers, and nearly 70% say they want to quit^{1,2} If you're one of them, there's no time like the present. Kicking a nicotine habit is hard, but it's also achievable if you take it one day at a time — and if you take advantage of free tobacco cessation resources that come with your State of Iowa health benefits. In honor of [The Great American Smokeout](#)[®] on Nov. 18, 2021, here is some inspiration to help you to give up tobacco for good — and some information on the health benefits that can help you do just that.

FOUR REASONS TO QUIT

1. Lower your risk for health complications.

Even if you've smoked for many years, it's never too late to quit and start seeing health improvements. Your body begins to recover from the effects of smoking within minutes after your last cigarette:³

- Twenty minutes after quitting, your heart rate and blood pressure drop.
- In one month to one year, coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
- In one to two years, your risk of heart attack drops dramatically.
- In 10 years, your risk of lung cancer decreases by about half.
- After 15 years, your risk of heart disease is similar to someone who never smoked.

2. Protect your loved ones.

When you smoke around others, you're exposing them to secondhand smoke, which comes with a whole list of potential health problems, including asthma, heart disease and cancer. Infants and young children are particularly vulnerable.

3. Give yourself a raise.

As you know, cigarettes are expensive, and quitting can save you a lot of money. In fact, if you give up a 15-cigarette-per-day habit, in 20 years you'll have an extra \$65,000 to spare.

4. Hold on to your youthful appearance.

The chemicals in cigarettes can wreak havoc on all systems of the body — not just your heart and lungs — leading to wrinkles, sagging skin, age spots, thinning hair, yellow teeth and nails and tooth loss. Studies have shown that middle-aged smokers may have as many wrinkles as non-smokers over 60, and smokers are likely to look about 14 years older than non-smokers by the time they turn 70⁴



WHAT ABOUT VAPING?

Former smokers and younger generations have been finding themselves addicted to nicotine through different means in recent decades — namely electronic cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes, vapor cigarettes or vapes. Today, more than 8 million Americans vape and 3.5 million of those are middle and high school students.^{7,8} The growing popularity of these products is partially due to flavoring options, as well as their reputation as a healthier, more discreet nicotine option, but that's not entirely true.

Vaping e-cigarettes can cause many of the same health hazards as smoking such as increased risks of cancer, cardiovascular disease and infertility.⁹

The CDC is also investigating cases of a severe lung illness believed to be linked to vaping.¹⁰

YOU HAVE RESOURCES TO HELP YOU QUIT

Your State of Iowa employee health coverage offers FREE resources to help you quit that can boost your chances for success by six times.⁵ Every plan year, you are covered for:⁶

- A free stop-tobacco appointment with your personal doctor.
- Two free 90-day treatments — that's 180 days of treatment per year.
- Free tobacco cessation aids prescribed by your doctor to help you control your cravings including prescription medications, patches, gums, lozenges, inhalers and nasal sprays.

READY TO GET STARTED?

Pick up your phone and schedule a tobacco screening with your personal doctor. The screening, counseling sessions and prescriptions you receive to help you quit are free!

1. <https://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/great-american-smokeout.html>
2. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/smoking-cessation-fast-facts/index.html
3. <https://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco/benefits-of-quitting-smoking-over-time.html>
4. <https://tobaccofreelife.org/resources/smoking-effect-skin/>
5. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/quit-smoking/in-depth/quit-smoking-products/art-20045599>
6. <https://das.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/hr/benefits/documents/WellmarkTobaccoFlyer.pdf>
7. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/smoking-cessation-fast-facts/index.html
8. <https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/results-2018-national-youth-tobacco-survey-show-dramatic-increase-e-cigarette-use-among-youth-over>
9. <https://www.wellmark.com/blue/healthy-living/vaping-how-a-new-generation-is-getting-hooked-on-nicotine>
10. <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2019/s0817-pulmonary-disease-ecigarettes.html>

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