



FROM THE OFFICE OF
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November Nurse News

November marks the month of the “Great American Smoke Out” or GASO, which occurs on the third Thursday in November every year. This year it will be on November 17th. In 1972, Arthur Mullaney, a high school guidance counselor in Randolph, Massachusetts, challenged smokers in town to quit smoking for the day and donate the money saved to a scholarship fund for the students. The event raised \$4,500 and was so well received that it became an annual event. This local campaign caught the attention of the American Cancer Society, which helped support and market the event in 1974.

The Great American Smoke Out encourages smokers to put their health first by making a commitment to stop smoking for good. GASO is celebrated throughout the United States with parades, speeches, rallies, press releases, and other media events. GASO helps to emphasize the dangers of tobacco use and the challenges of quitting, and has inspired changes to occur. Federal laws now prohibit smoking on airlines and many states have bans that protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke exposure in restaurants, bars, and workplaces. GASO increases community awareness of the dangers of smoking and addresses the rights of nonsmokers to breathe smoke-free air in public places.

Despite progress made in reducing smoking, an estimated 46.6 million adults in the United States still smoke. Even more troubling, about 40% of nonsmokers (and 54% of children aged 3-11 years) in the United States are exposed to secondhand smoke, and an estimated 443,000 deaths each year are attributed to smoking and secondhand smoke.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. One in two long-term smokers will die from a smoking-related disease. Nicotine dependence is the most common form of chemical dependence in the U.S. Smoking costs the U.S. \$96 billion in medical expenses each year. Quitting smoking is the single most important action that smokers can take to protect their own health and their families' health.

Children face a higher risk than adults of the negative effects of smoking and secondhand smoke. Not only is a child's body still developing physically, but their breathing rate is faster than that of adults. When the air is contaminated with cigarette smoke, young, developing lungs receive a higher concentration of inhaled toxins than do older lungs. Here are some alarming facts about secondhand smoke and children.

Children, who spend one hour in an extremely smoky room, inhale enough toxic chemicals to equal smoking ten cigarettes.

The EPA estimates that between 200,000 and 1,000,000 kids with asthma have their condition worsened by second hand smoke.

Passive smoking may also be responsible for thousands of new cases of asthma every year.

Children in smoking households experience more middle ear infections. Inhaled cigarette smoke irritates the Eustachian tube, and swelling leads to infections, which are the most common cause of hearing loss in children.

So, if you smoke, NOW IS THE TIME TO QUIT!

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