

Written by the National Cancer Institute, NNPA Special Commentary
Thursday, 19 November 2009 16:18

(NNPA) - Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. The death toll from smoking exceeds that from HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, motor vehicle collisions, suicide, and even homicide. In fact, 90 percent of lung cancers, the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States, are caused by tobacco. Unfortunately lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths among African American men and women. Mortality rates for lung cancer are highest among African American males.

Every November, smokers across the nation take part in the Great American Smokeout and National Lung Cancer Awareness Month. On the third Thursday of November, smokers are asked to quit smoking for at least one day and hopefully for life.

Quitting smoking can help reduce lung cancer and other tobacco-caused cancers among African American communities. Twenty five percent of African American males and 16 percent of African American female adults smoke cigarettes (CDC, MMWR 2008). Furthermore, 15 percent of African American high school boys and 8 percent of high school girls smoke cigarettes (YRBS, 2007).

Seventy percent of African American adults want to quit smoking. Quitting smoking has short-term and long-term benefits. As soon as you quit, your body starts to heal itself. Once you quit smoking, breathing becomes easier. Your blood pressure, elevated by nicotine, decreases. Your ability to smell and taste improves. Long-term benefits include reducing your risk of lung cancer and other diseases of the lung and heart.

It is never too late to quit. Studies have shown that quitting before age 30 reduces 90 percent of tobacco-related morbidity and mortality. People who quit by age 50 reduce their risk of dying prematurely by 50 percent compared with those who continue to smoke — even people who quit at about age 60 or older live longer than those who continue to smoke.

It's time for a change. If you or anyone you know wants to quit smoking:

- Talk to your doctor or other health care provider about quitting smoking.
- Visit our websites that provide information on how to become smoke free. (<http://www.smokefree.gov> and <http://women.smokefree.gov/>

- Or, call the National Cancer Institute's Smoking Quitline toll-free at 1-877-44U-QUIT (1-877-448-7848). The information specialists on the Quitline can provide suggestions and support on how to become and remain smokefree and identify resources that best fits your needs.

- To learn more about lung cancer, please visit www.cancer.gov
- And don't forget, your friends and family as you go through the process of becoming smokefree.

They can be great sources of support and encouragement.

To honor the Great American Smokeout and Lung Cancer Awareness Month, smokers quit for a Day for L

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This November, we ask you to join others in the African American communities in honoring the Great American Smokeout and Lung Cancer Awareness Month by quitting smoking today.

NCI leads the National Cancer Program and the NIH effort to dramatically reduce the burden of cancer and improve the lives of cancer patients and their families, through research into prevention and cancer biology, the development of new interventions, and the training and mentoring of new researchers. For more information about cancer, please visit the NCI Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov> or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237).