myHealth CONNECTIONS
PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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Wellness Wednesdays

NOVEMBER, 2025 WEEK 1

DO YOUR LUNGS A FAVOR: Quitting Now

Smoking and vaping have wide-ranging effects on your health, especially your lungs and heart. Smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer, and it also increases your risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema, and heart disease.

While e-cigarettes are promoted as a "healthier" alternative, they contribute to damage of lung tissue, increase inflammation, and may expose you to cancer-causing chemicals. According to the CDC and the American Lung Association, vaping can also worsen existing asthma and increase your risk of developing respiratory infections.

Tips for Quitting NOW

When you quit smoking, the health benefits are immediate! Within 20 minutes of smoking the last cigarette, your heart rate and blood pressure begin to drop. After one day, your risk of a heart attack goes down. And the longer you stay smoke-free, the stronger your lungs and immune system become.

Vaping is often marketed as a safer alternative, but research shows that e-cigarettes still pose serious risks. According to the American Lung Association, e-cigarettes release toxic chemicals and heavy metals that damage lungs. Both smoking and vaping may worsen respiratory conditions like asthma and COPD and increase your chances of developing chronic lung disease.

There's support when you are ready to stop smoking. **The Great American Smokeout** CLICK OR TAP! is a great opportunity to take that first step with support. The annual nationwide movement to quit tobacco, starts on the third Thursday of November. The ACS provides tips, resources, and programs you can utilize to make

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CLICK OR TAP! **We've highlighted some resources you may want to look into further. Simply click or tap the icon or its hyperlink to access these select materials!**

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your life tobacco-free. Whether you're quitting cigarettes or e-cigarettes, tools like personalized coaching, nicotine replacement therapies, and behavioral support will help you stay on track.

Breathing Easy

Improving indoor air quality is a powerful way to protect your lungs and reduce triggers for respiratory symptoms. You don't need expensive equipment – small changes can make a difference. Here are practical steps to support cleaner air in your home:

❶ Control the sources

If you haven't quit tobacco, avoid smoking or vaping indoors. Choose low-VOC or fragrance-free cleaning products, paints, and finishes. Fix leaks and water damage promptly to prevent mold growth.

❷ Increase ventilation

Open windows on opposite sides of rooms when weather and outdoor air quality allow to create cross-ventilation. Use exhaust fans in kitchens and bathrooms when cooking or showering. If your HVAC system allows, enable fresh-air intake.

❸ Keep things clean

Dust and vacuum at least weekly using a vacuum with a HEPA filter. Wash bedding, rugs, and curtains regularly in hot water. Wipe down surfaces with a damp cloth to trap dust instead of spreading it.

Implementing even a few of these steps can reduce indoor irritants, help your lungs recover, and make your home feel cleaner and more breathable.

Protect Your Lungs and Your Peace

With the holiday season upon us, focus on the habits that make you feel more energized and resilient. Whether that's spending time outdoors, cooking nourishing meals, or saying no to habits that no longer serve you, your lungs will thank you for the extra TLC.

ComPsych EAP and **BCBSIL** offer support for quitting tobacco and stress management year-round. Visit your employee portal to access free tools, quit programs, and coaching options.

SOURCES: ***CDC***, ***American Lung Association***, ***EPA***, ***Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America***

Tips for quitting:

- Get free smoking cessation coaching through a "**quit line**" or with a mobile app
- Check out **Cook County Public Health's Unfriend Tobacco toolkit**
- Ask your doctor if medication is an option to help you quit
- Set a day to quit and tell your friends and family about it
- Get rid of all tobacco products and triggers in your home

Still not sure which path is right for you? Learn the facts about vaping vs. smoking and talk to your health provider about a personalized quit plan.

Share this article with your colleagues so they too can enjoy a smoke-free lifestyle!