

**Reasons To Be Thankful You Quit Smoking**

**By Sarah Trafton, Tobacco-Free Action**

Wrestling with nicotine addiction and the decision to quit smoking is no small task. On average, quitting may take 8-11 attempts before a smoker successfully breaks the habit. The support of family and friends, as well as a healthcare provider increase a smoker’s chances of quitting. In fact, those that seek help from their physician double or even triple their odds.

With Thanksgiving on the horizon, it’s the perfect time to count your blessings and appreciate how much quitting smoking has improved or could improve your life. In addition to Thanksgiving, the **Great American Smoke Out** also takes place this month on Nov. 18. The annual observance became a nationwide event in the 1970s. Each year, the American Cancer Society encourages people to start their journey to a smoke-free lifestyle on the third Thursday in November.

Whether you’ve already quit, are considering quitting, or would like to encourage and support a loved one with their quitting process, it’s important to remember the immense benefits of quitting:

**Improved health**

The average life expectancy for smokers is **10 years** **shorter** than for nonsmokers. That’s another decade you get to spend with your friends and family. Twenty minutes after your last cigarette, your heart rate returns to normal and over time, your risk of heart attack, heart disease, stroke and 12 types of cancer is greatly reduced.

Some methods of fighting nicotine cravings, such as drinking more water, exercising and avoiding caffeine and alcohol, will contribute to your overall health and wellbeing.

**Improved self-image**

Smoking wrinkles your skin, yellows your teeth and stains your nails. Quitting smoking can make you appear younger and your dentist will thank you. People that feel insecure about their teeth often avoid smiling –a behavior which releases endorphins and can improve your mood. You also won’t have to worry about the lingering smell of cigarettes on your clothes, in your car or in your home.

**Cost savings**

Smoking a pack per day means spending about $2,292 per year. That’s over two thousand dollars that you could put toward a vacation—and this doesn’t even include medical costs from smoking-related illnesses. Smoking lowers your immune system, and smokers are more likely to have respiratory infections.

**Quality of life**

Smoking affects your sense of taste and smell. Why not enjoy Thanksgiving dinner to the fullest? You will be able to spend more quality time with family and be more engaged in holiday festivities without having to step outside for a smoke. If you’re hosting this holiday season, your home will be more inviting and healthier for guests without the smell of cigarette smoke. You will sleep easier knowing you are not exposing your loved ones or pets to secondhand smoke—plus smokers are more likely to snore.

Writing down your reasons for quitting and reminding yourself of them often can help keep you focused on your goal.

Similar to how keeping a gratitude journal can help you through difficult times, reminding yourself of your reasons can help you navigate through your cravings and triggers. It’s also important to celebrate your milestones—whether you made it through your first day without smoking, your first week, month or year.

It’s never too late to quit smoking. No matter what date you pick, or how many times you’ve tried, you can quit on your own terms, for your own reasons, with the support and methods that work for you.

**Resources:**

In addition to enlisting the support of your friends, family and healthcare provider, you can also receive free support by calling the **New York State Smoker’s Quitline** at 1-866-697-8487. The Quitline provides free, confidential counseling via telephone, chat box or text, as well as free nicotine patches.

**BecomeAnEx** is a free online quit service that allows you to create a customized quit plan, provides text message support, interactive guides and tools, tips and advice, and connects you to a community of other people on their quit journey. Visit becomeanex.org to sign up.

For youth looking to quit vaping, **This is Quitting** is a free and anonymous text messaging service tailored to teens and young adults. To join, text DITCHVAPE to 88709.

For a full list of resources, visit our website at <https://www.rvwtobaccofree.org/quit-resources/>

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*The Healthcare Consortium is a local charitable organization with a mission of improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the residents in our rural community. The agency is located at 325 Columbia St. in Hudson. For more information: visit www.columbiahealthnet.org or call 518-822-8820.*