



MEDIA ADVISORY

KNOX COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

140 Dameron Avenue, Knoxville, TN 37917-6413

KCHD, Smoke-Free Knoxville, and the UT Center for Health Education and Wellness celebrate the Great American Smokeout

- Who:** Knox County Health Department (KCHD), Smoke-Free Knoxville and the University of Tennessee Center for Health Education and Wellness (CHEW)
- What:** In honor of the Great American Smokeout, KCHD and Smoke-Free Knoxville will be at the University of Tennessee with the Center for Health Education and Wellness encouraging students and staff to quit tobacco products, even for just one day. Those interested can throw away their tobacco products at a booth staffed by KCHD and Smoke-Free Knoxville as well as get information on quitting. Those who toss their tobacco products on-site will be registered for a prize drawing.
- When:** Thursday, Nov. 16 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; the media may come any time but class transitions at 10:55 a.m., 12:25 p.m. and 1:55 p.m. may provide the best visuals.
- Where:** The University of Tennessee's Pedestrian Mall/Walkway, near the Whirlwind Art.
- Interviews:** Kerri Thompson, KCHD tobacco use prevention and control public health educator, will be available.

Background:

Created by the American Cancer Society, the Great American Smokeout takes place on the third Thursday of November every year. The national observation is designed to encourage smokers to use the date to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking that day.

Tobacco use is the largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the U.S. Reducing tobacco use is one of the priority health issues outlined in KCHD's [Community Health Assessment](#). Tobacco use in youth and pregnant women, as well as the increased use of vaping products are areas of concern in the assessment. In fact, e-cigarette use among middle and high school students tripled from 2013 to 2014, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2017, 24.5 percent of public high school students in Knox County reported they used a tobacco product. In 2014, more than 21 percent of Knox County adults reported smoking cigarettes.

The benefits of quitting can begin almost immediately. A smoker's heart rate and blood pressure drop just 20 minutes after stopping, and carbon monoxide levels in blood drop to normal after 12 hours. Those who stop for two to three months experience improved circulation and lung function. And after five years, the risk of various cancers is about half that of a person who is still smoking.

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