

The Great American Smokeout: Help is Available

Thursday November 21 is the American Cancer Society's (ACS) Great American Smokeout, designed to provide an opportunity for people who smoke to commit to healthy, smoke-free lives.

Research published in *The Lancet* found that that smoking can be attributed to 1 in every 10 deaths globally, which is equivalent to 6.4 million people every year.

Researchers studied the smoking habits in 195 countries and territories between, and found that smoking remains a leading global risk factor for death and disability.

Dr. Sudhir Mungee is an OSF HealthCare Cardiovascular Institute interventional cardiologist. He says it's a risk factor that is also completely preventable if the right steps are taken.

"A single risk factor has an impact on not only the vascular disease, but also pulmonary diseases," said Dr. Mungee. "It's a no brainer. Quitting smoking is probably the biggest favor one can do to your overall improved health status."

While the U.S. smoking rate has dropped by about 2 percent every year for both men and women since 1990, about 15 percent of American adults are still regular smokers. That amounts to about 37 million smokers.

According to Dr. Mungee, patients often wait too long to quit, and seek help only after a major health event.

"This day and age, where the information is so available and the help is already there, I think you need to have a preemptive strike. You need to quit on smoking before it strikes you," he said. "And I think that's the key. I think patient education, empowerment of knowledge, those are very important factors."

Dr. Mungee says like any addiction, smoking is a hard habit to kick, but the benefits of quitting can be felt immediately.

"You have a lot of opportunities for help to quit smoking," said Dr. Mungee. "I do agree, it's not easy. But you know what? The only people who can do it are the ones who are smoking right now, and we are here to help them."

Quitting is possible with the right tools. If you are struggling with a smoking addiction, ask your OSF HealthCare provider about available programs to help you quit, or visit the [Lung & Pulmonology resource page](#) at osfhealthcare.org for more information.