

Time to quit— Free resources available to help smokers with resolutions

KENTUCKY TODAY

This is the time when people make their New Year's resolutions and the American Lung Association (ALA) is encouraging people who use tobacco and nicotine products to make a resolution to quit in 2026, provides free resources.

According to the ALA, nearly one-fifth of adults in Kentucky use at least one tobacco or nicotine product such as cigarettes, e-cigarettes or nicotine pouches. Nicotine is extremely addictive, so the American Lung Association is offering free resources and support to help people quit tobacco and nicotine products for good.

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Kentucky, killing 8,860 people each year. While it's best to quit as early as possible, quitting tobacco and nicotine products at any age will enhance the length and quality of your life.

"In our state, 17.4 percent of adults smoke and 20.5 percent of high school students use a tobacco product," said Shannon Baker, Director of Advocacy with the American Lung Association in Kentucky. "We know that breaking the addiction to nicotine is extremely difficult. For most people, it takes multiple attempts to quit tobacco for good. Each quit attempt brings a person closer to reaching their goal. It is critical that people who are ready speak with their healthcare provider about Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved nicotine and tobacco treatment medications, coupling them with proven effective cessation programs to quit."

The American Lung Association offers a free Lung Helpline to help people get started on their journey to quit. People can call 1-800-LUNGUSA to connect with a licensed registered nurse, respiratory therapist or certified tobacco treatment specialist. Services to help people quit nicotine and tobacco are available for adults and also teens ages 13 and up. The Lung Helpline also offers programs to employers to help their employees quit.

In addition, the Lung Helpline can help assist

with information about lung cancer screening if they are eligible, help navigate insurance challenges, and connect people with Lung Health Navigators who specialize in lung cancer, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and pulmonary fibrosis.

Visit the American Lung Association website at Lung.org or call the Lung Helpline at 1-800-LUNGUSA (1-800-586-4872) and press 2. Most health insurance covers medications and counseling to help you quit. If you don't have insurance, check out coverage options through Healthcare.gov— open enrollment runs through Jan. 15. For more information, visit Lung.org/openrollment.

Locally, the Lake Cumberland District Health Department offers Smoking/Tobacco Cessation programs. For more information or to register, call 1-800-928-4416, ext. 1150.

American Dental Association offers sugar intake tips to prevent cavities

BY STATEPOINT

Holiday celebrations often feature lots of great food and drinks, including sweet treats to indulge in. But too much sugar in your diet can weaken your teeth, leaving your smile vulnerable to cavities. After a sweet holiday season, follow these five sugar intake tips so you can prevent cavities and improve your oral and overall health in 2026.

Restore the balance. If your holiday season was filled with candy canes, hot cocoa and cookies, now is the time to revive a balanced diet with a variety of healthy foods from each of the five major food groups. Fill your plate with whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and low-fat dairy foods.

Sugary beverages, such as soda and juice, should be served sparingly, as healthier options like water and plain milk offer far more nutritional value. "Water is the best beverage for your teeth," said American Dental Association dentist Mirissa Price. "Not only does water help wash away cavity-causing bacteria and weaken the acids in your

mouth, but water with optimal levels of fluoride strengthens your teeth against cavities."

Be picky if it's sticky and watch out for starch. You might think dried fruit is a healthy choice, but raisins and dried cranberries often stick to your teeth, giving the bacteria in your mouth more time to feast on the natural sugars. Meanwhile, starchy foods like chips and cakes often get trapped between your teeth, where cavities also form. "If you choose these foods, pair them with water, and make sure to brush and floss thoroughly," said Price.

Resolve to maintain your dental routine. Speaking of brushing and flossing, it's important to keep up with your dental care routine no matter what your diet looks like. That means brushing your teeth twice daily with fluoride toothpaste and cleaning between your teeth once a day. Choose dental products with the ADA Seal of Acceptance and see your dentist regularly for valuable checkups. Appointments can fill up fast after the holidays, so schedule them far in advance to avoid delays.

Timing matters. Instead of eating sweets on their own, pair them with meals or eat them shortly after mealtimes. During a meal, your mouth releases more saliva, which is another tool in the fight against tooth decay, canceling out acids and washing away food from teeth and gums. Saliva also contains minerals to repair weakened teeth. For snacks between meals, choose a healthy option like fruit, vegetables or cheese. "If you find yourself enjoying a sweet treat apart from a meal, chewing sugar-free gum with the ADA Seal of Acceptance after can increase saliva and may help counter acidity," Price said.

Set a good example. It's no surprise that most kids also want to enjoy a sweet treat now and then, but remem-

ber that cavities are the most common chronic childhood disease. Provide children with foods and drinks that are healthy and low in sugar, remind them about regular at-home dental care, and set a good example by modeling all the tips above.

To learn more about how nutrition affects your teeth, visit MouthHealthy.org/nutrition. For help keeping your child's dental routine on track, visit MouthHealthy.org/calendar to download a free 12-month brushing and flossing calendar.

"Making choices to keep your mouth healthy doesn't stop you from enjoying good food," Price said. "Finding a balance is key, and the start of a new year is a great time to focus on healthy behaviors to benefit your dental and overall health."

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Ange Olt, DVM



**Wishing
everyone a
Healthy, Happy
New Year!**

Let's start the year on a healthier note

As we step into the New Year, it's natural to reflect on our lives and think about the changes we'd like to make. For many, this is the perfect time to focus on health and well-being.

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