



Great American Smokeout Resource

Empowering South Dakotans Toward a Tobacco-Free Future

For over 40 years, the American Cancer Society has led the charge against smoking through the annual **Great American Smokeout (GASO)**, held on the third Thursday of November – this year on **November 20, 2025**. This powerful event serves as a catalyst for individuals, organizations, businesses, healthcare providers, and communities to take collective action toward a healthier, smoke-free future.

Why Participate?

The Great American Smokeout is more than a single day event – it's a nationwide movement that empowers people who smoke to commit to a healthier, smoke-free life. It's a unique opportunity to:

- **Encourage Quitting:** Motivate individuals to take their first step toward a tobacco-free lifestyle.
- **Raise Awareness:** Educate communities about the health risks of tobacco and nicotine products.
- **Promote Long-term Success:** Share cessation tools and resources to support people in quitting all forms of tobacco- cigarettes, vapes, and nicotine pouches alike.

Ways to Get Involved

Community Organizations

- Host events or resource tables promoting quitting tools and support programs.
- Partner with local media to share stories of successful quit journeys and anti-smoking PSAs.
- Take the Empathy Pledge – Encourage non-smokers to participate by giving up something they enjoy for a day (such as coffee, caffeine, or candy). Afterward, have them reflect on the experience to better understand the challenges of breaking a habit like smoking.

Schools & Youth Groups

- Incorporate tobacco-free education and creative prevention activities.
- Encourage peer-to-peer presentations or student-led campaigns highlighting the dangers of tobacco and vaping.
- Share student-created anti-tobacco messages in school announcements, newsletters, or social media.

Businesses & Workplaces

- Offer cessation resources to employees.
- Create a smoke-free pledge wall or host a “quit challenge” to show support.

Healthcare Providers

- Use the day to initiate conversations about quitting.
- Provide cessation materials and connect patients to quitline services.

Tools & Resources

National Support

The [American Cancer Society](#) offers a variety of tools to help people quit smoking, including online support, counseling, nicotine replacement therapies, and more. Although originally focused on smoking cessation, the GASO is also an ideal time to discuss quitting all tobacco products. For more information and resources, visit: cancer.org/smokeout.

South Dakota Support

The [South Dakota Tobacco Control Program](#) has put together a guide for schools to use if they are interested in participating in the GASO:

Integrate Anti-Tobacco Messages Across School Channels:

- Share facts, statistics, and student-created messages in: school newspapers, yearbooks, media channels, or announcements

Leverage Local Media:

- Work with local radio stations and newspapers to feature student-led PSAs (public service announcements) on the dangers of smoking and vaping. For pre-made PSAs, visit [Quit Tobacco SD Media Library](#).

Peer-to-Peer Presentations:

- Empower middle and high school students to present anti-tobacco messages to younger students, reinforcing leadership and peer influence. They may share personal stories, lead discussions, or showcase creative projects like posters or short videos.

Incorporate Anti-Tobacco Themes in the Curriculum:

- Make tobacco awareness a part of lessons across different subjects, for example:
 - English/Language Arts: Assign essays on the dangers of smoking, vaping, and other tobacco products.
 - Math: Create word problems around the cost of smoking over a lifetime.
 - Health: Explore the physical effects of smoking and tobacco on the body.

See the following pages for anti-tobacco messaging and activity ideas. For additional activities, resources, and information to use in your classroom, please visit the updated [Tobacco Prevention Toolkit](#).

Please contact South Dakota Tobacco Control Program at DOHTobaccoControl@state.sd.us for more assistance and continued support.

Anti-Tobacco Talking Points:

The following announcements are designed to communicate the importance of a tobacco-free environment to a wide range of students, from kindergarteners to high school seniors, as well as staff and visitors. These messages can be adapted for different age groups and school settings, ensuring that everyone understands the commitment to health and safety.

Remind your students of tobacco policies at your school.

"At our school, we are proud to be 100% tobacco-free. For the health and safety of everyone, we remind all students, staff, and visitors that using tobacco products, including e-cigarettes and vapes, is not allowed anywhere on campus. Let's work together to keep our school a healthy place for all!"

Our policy is enforced to protect and prevent tobacco use for our students.

"Did you know that smoking causes 1,300 deaths in South Dakota each year? Right now, 21,000 kids under 18 in our state could die early from smoking. That's why our school is 100% tobacco-free. We're committed to making sure everyone in our school community stays healthy and safe."

Tobacco use in teens and young adults have serious health consequences.

"In the U.S., smoking causes more deaths than alcohol, car accidents, and illegal drugs combined. This is one reason (name of school district) is proud to be 100% tobacco-free. Together, we can make sure our school is a safe and healthy place for everyone."

Tailor your message to fit your audience.

"Did you know that kids are three times more likely to be influenced by tobacco ads than adults? Tobacco companies spend billions trying to get young people to start smoking. At (insert school district), we're pushing back with a 100% tobacco-free policy to protect our students from tobacco's harmful effects."

"Most people who start smoking do it before they're 18. That's why (name of school district) has a rule that no one can use tobacco anywhere at school. We want to help everyone make healthy choices so we can all be strong and do our best!"

Drive it home! Tell your students why this policy is important.

"E-cigarettes and vapes can be harmful to your health. They can lead to nicotine addiction, lung disease, and even slow down brain development in teens. That's why (insert school district) has made sure that vapes are part of our 100% tobacco-free policy. We want to keep you safe!"

Anti-Tobacco Activities:

[Two Truths and a Myth](#)

In this interactive lesson, students will examine the facts and myths surrounding smoking and tobacco use. The activity begins with a short presentation on the dangers of smoking, followed by a “Two Truths and a Myth” game, where students work to identify the false statement among three smoking-related claims.

[Creative Ways to Say No](#)

In this activity, students will brainstorm and practice strategies for refusing tobacco products in real-life situations. After a brief discussion on peer pressure and the importance of standing up for one’s health, students will work in groups to develop creative, confident, and assertive ways to say no to smoking or vaping. Each group will then role-play scenarios to demonstrate their refusal techniques.

[Athletes Before and After](#)

In this lesson, students will explore how smoking affects athletic performance and overall physical health. Through visuals, speaker notes, and interactive demonstrations, the activity highlights how smoking limits the body’s ability to perform physical tasks. Students will compare athletes’ abilities before and after smoking to better understand the impact of tobacco use on lung capacity, endurance, and performance.

[Recipe of a Cigarette](#)

In this activity, students explore the harmful ingredients in cigarettes by creating a “recipe” for one. After learning about chemicals like nicotine, formaldehyde, and arsenic, students research their effects and present why these substances make smoking dangerous, reinforcing the importance of staying tobacco-free.

Promote Long-Term Success:

As school leaders, your role is crucial in ensuring policies address the current landscape, including the rise of vaping and e-cigarette use among students. Revisiting these policies helps make them comprehensive, enforceable, and supportive of a healthier environment. Encourage your school community to raise awareness, offer resources for quitting, and reinforce a commitment to a tobacco-free campus. For more information on policy resources, please visit [Policy Support Materials \(quittobaccosd.com\)](https://quittobaccosd.com).