Come Monday, a new start
Program helps those who want to quit smoking

December 30, 2008
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In case your New Year’s resolution to quit smoking doesn’t last the weekend, you can try again Monday.

And, if necessary, the next Monday. And the Monday after that.

"The idea of starting again each week comes from a health initiative called Stay Quit Monday. It’s part of the nonprofit public health campaign Healthy Monday, aimed at helping people keep all sorts of resolutions by reviewing them 52 times a year.

Why Monday? The organization’s Web site, healthymonday.org, explains: “It’s a fresh start — the January of each week. A day to reflect and commit, celebrate your progress, or to start again if you relapse.”

Quitting smoking reduces the risk of cancer, heart disease, respiratory diseases and other tobacco-related diseases. Most smokers try to quit five to seven times before they quit for good, said Jay Rosenburg, health initiatives manager for the American Cancer Society, DuPage Region.

“What’s nice about Healthy Monday is every time you don’t stay quit, you learn something — ‘That’s a trigger situation for me,’ or ‘That’s a bad time for me. You’re just just try to keep trying,’ she said.

The holidays are bigger for some. Every November, the American Cancer Society sponsors the Great American Smokeout, a nationwide day to quit smoking. But people find it hard to smoke when they gather with friends and family over the following weeks, Rosenburg said.

“If you have a cigarette, it’s easy to light up,” she said. “OK, I’m a nonsmoker. I just had a cigarette. I can try again Monday.”

Stay Quit Monday is free. It’s how it works: Each Monday, participants can call a quit line for counseling and check online resources for weekly news, tools and encouragement. All are listed on the Stay Quit Monday Web site.

For example, at www.cancer.org/treatmentfighters, participants can click on the Great American Smokeout to download a free quit guide. It counts down the days until quit day, then provides motivational messages every day for a month afterward.

Another free download is the Craving Tracker — a motivating game participants can open on their computer desktops to distract themselves when they get a craving.

“If people delay, often that craving will pass,” Rosenburg said.