

Public Health

No Longer Addicted

By Karen Kolatka

I'm not addicted to cigarettes today, and every day I have \$7.00 extra to spend or save, as I choose.



There was a time (less than a year ago) that I had to have a five dollar bill always ready to give, feeling like a fool, for deadly addictive cigarettes. Sometimes, I would have a fit of coughing and still cough up the words, "could I have a pack of..."

Finally, and after failing at using just the patch, I went to a smoking cessation clinic that a friend told me about. She had already developed asthma, chronic bronchitis, and non-reversible emphysema after smoking a pack a day for 28 years (since she was twelve years old). I was sure she couldn't quit, just as I knew it was hopeless for me too. What could help besides the patch? I found out there were other stop-smoking aides, like nicotine inhalers and nicotine gum – all weaker than addictive cigarettes, but strong enough to finally help me taper off the number of cigarettes I was smoking daily.

“ I quit smoking painlessly (and probably for good) because I attended a smoking cessation clinic. I was only smoking half a pack at a time (down from a pack and a half a day), and less and less 'til I was down to seven deadly addictive cigarettes a day. ”

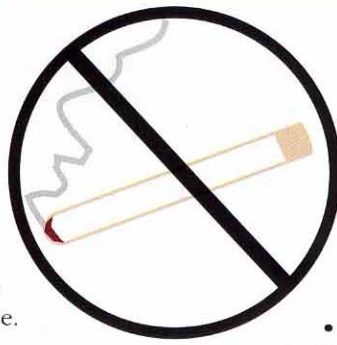
When I started at the clinic, I was asked a lot of questions about my smoking pattern, and then given prescriptions for the nicotine patch, nicotine inhalers, and eventually nicotine, which I chewed for hours. There was also a pill available, called Zyban.

I was surprised that when I said I smoked when I was very worried about something, that I was told "leave it to God, just let God take care of it if its something that you can't do anything about, and use the nicotine stop smoking aides at that time."

It took a month to get down to half a cigarette a day. Then the challenge was to not buy another pack. The nicotine aides were honestly satisfying enough to get through withdrawal. It was a turning point for me. Instantly, I had more money and better health, and I was also able to shun drug addicted cigarette smokers.

Every week, then every month I became less addicted to deadly cigarettes – 'til they no longer had a hold on me. Finally, I was free of a very addictive, yet "socially acceptable" and easily available drug that some people have said was harder to kick than heroine.

I never want to do it again! I felt miserable for months after I quit, but woke up happy that I wasn't a drug addict any more. I was cigarette free, just as I was years ago, only this time I realized how dangerous just one cigarette could be. Other people could do the same as I did, especially if they attend a smoking cessation clinic.



Health Alert

Stop Smoking

(from NYC Health, Nov/Dec 2002)

Quit Yet?

Want to Quit Smoking? You can!

- Quitting smoking is the most important thing you can do for your health.
- Smoking is the #1 cause of preventable death in New York City, killing more than 10,000 New Yorkers each year.
- A million New Yorkers who smoke say they want to quit. If you smoke, here are some things you should know.

If You Smoke

- Each cigarette shortens your life by 11 minutes.
- Each pack shortens your life by 3 hours.
- Each week, you lose a day of life.
- You are likely to die 14 years earlier than if you hadn't smoked.

Benefits of Quitting Smoking

24 hours after quitting: Chance of heart attack decreases

48 hours after quitting: Ability to smell and taste improves

2-3 weeks after quitting: Circulation improves. Walking becomes easier. Lung function improves

1 month after quitting: Coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue and shortness of breath decrease. Cilia re-grow in the lungs, increasing ability to handle mucus and reducing infection

1 year after quitting: Excess risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker

5 years after quitting: Risk of cancer of the lungs, mouth, throat and esophagus decreases by about half. Smoke risk is reduced to that of non-smokers

10 years after quitting: Lung cancer death rate similar to that of non-smokers

15 years after quitting: Risk of coronary heart disease is that of non-smokers

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