

Statistics speak: smoking a factor
By Mike DeCinti

Three things came out of my article two weeks ago. One, people read it. Thank you for that. Two, I received a lot of nice compliments on the article and even a couple “atta-boys” for talking about something that needed to be talked about. And finally, I was told that I didn’t give enough practical information for those reading the article, to actually make some changes themselves. For those that didn’t get a chance to see it, I wrote about the new program “Honey We’re Killing the Kids” on The Learning Channel (TLC) that takes unhealthy overweight families and allows the parents (through computer technology) to see what their children will look like when they’re 40. The show then gives these families a plan to get healthy and literally save them from an early grave. I mentioned how making healthy lifestyle choices and managing your weight by eating better and exercising more can save you and your children from a future filled with health problems. I then ended the article by asking the readers to simply make better choices for a healthier life, but I guess I didn’t give any advice of how to do that. So, let’s start there.

For those who know me, I’m often asked how I stay in shape. And I basically answer that I do 2 things. I eat right and I exercise. I know it’s a bit simplistic, but it really is all you need to do. However, I probably should add a third thing to my list. Quit smoking. I often leave that one off mostly because I don’t smoke and never have. Now I know what you’re thinking, that’s all you need, someone who’s never smoked to lecture you about the dangers of smoking. Well, I’ve never shot myself in the foot with a nail gun before, but I can safely tell you that’s not a good idea either.

Did you know that after only 24 hours without a cigarette your chance of a heart attack decreases, and after only 3 months your lung capacity increases by 30%? I can only imagine how hard it must be to try and stop smoking, in fact of the 45 million smokers in this county 37 million of them are trying to quit. Quitting is not easy, but that shouldn’t be an excuse to stop trying. Here’s some advice that may help, but remember, if you have any questions or concerns contact your family physician.

- Try to quit with someone. Going it alone can be tough, but having the support of a spouse, best friend or co-worker can be beneficial. Ask people for their help. If they don’t know you need it, they probably won’t offer it. And let people know your quitting, so they’ll understand why you may be a little grumpy.
- Remember that the urge to smoke only lasts a few minutes, and will then pass. The urges gradually become farther and farther apart as the days go by. When you get that urge reach for a piece of fruit or sugarless gum, or try taking deep breathes.
- Do your very best to stay away from alcohol, sugar and coffee the first week or longer, as these tend to stimulate the desire for a cigarette. Avoid fatty foods, as you may gain weight even if you eat the same amount as before quitting. So discipline about diet and moderate exercise is extra important now.

- Change your normal routine – park at the back of the parking lot, take the stairs, walk the dog or even jog around the block. The more active you become the less you'll want to smoke.
- Ask friends and family members not to smoke in your presence. Don't be afraid to ask. This is more important than you may realize, and they will understand.
- Need even more help? Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or 1-877-44U-QUIT to talk to a trained counselor who can provide you with one on one counseling over the phone. Or visit informative websites like www.anti-smoking.org for helpful tips.

Don't let this be just another article nagging you about the dangers of smoking, but use it as the first step in the difficult journey to quit. Just try these six simple suggestions, and if you do try but fail, try again...and again...and again.