



QuitPack News

Vol. 1 No. 4

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Welcome to the fourth edition of the QuitPack News. This monthly newsletter helps us keep in touch with Yukoners who are moving toward becoming smoke-free with the help of a QuitPack. Here's how you can use this newsletter:

- Send in your comments about the QuitPack for us to share in upcoming newsletters– likes, dislikes, articles you'd like to see, etc.
- Let us know **your** tips for others as they try to quit.
- Suggest articles you'd like to see in the next issue.

We look forward to hearing from you!

The Staff at Health Promotion



Why Drinking and Becoming Smoke-Free Don't Mix

Drinking alcohol is one of the most frequent reasons why smokers who are trying to become smoke-free slip or relapse. We will dedicate this edition of the newsletter to explain the connection between drinking and smoking and give you some useful tips that will help you stay on track the next time you are out with friends having a drink.

What happens to your body when you drink and smoke? The good, the bad and the ugly!

- For many smokers, drinking and smoking go hand-in-hand. Cues in the environment (e.g., sitting in a bar with friends, listening to music at a lounge, partying with friends) can trigger urges to drink and urges to smoke. So drinking, or being around alcohol, while you are trying to become smoke-free means that you will need to resist those additional urges.

The most dangerous thought is "I'll just have one."

- Drinking alcohol lowers our inhibitions that stop us from doing things we might regret in the morning. Under the influence of alcohol, it's easy to lose control. In the early days of becoming smoke-free, most smokers have to concentrate all their energies on this goal – this is not best time to give up control by drinking! While under the influence of alcohol, it's easier to think that smoking *just one cigarette* or *I'll smoke only tonight* is okay and that you can become smoke-free again tomorrow.... But this kind of thinking can set you up for relapse.
- Alcohol and nicotine in tobacco act on the same reward centers in the brain. This means that drinking and smoking may reinforce each other – the more you smoke, the more you will want to drink and the more you drink, the more you will want to smoke.
- And as if all this isn't bad enough, nicotine slows down the effects of alcohol, leading you to drink more than you might otherwise do.

The bottom line is that alcohol and the early stages of becoming smoke-free are not a good mix. It's important to maintain control of your senses when you are learning to live a smoke-free life, and alcohol puts you at risk of giving into the urge to smoke.

Drinking is a social activity, and there's lots of advertising that promotes drinking and smoking as fun activities and ways to relax. You may be used to drinking and smoking with friends and have lots of good memories of doing so. But in order to become smoke-free, you need to give yourself the best possible environment for success that you can. There are other ways of having fun! Try something new. One QuitPack program participant suggested having a dessert evening with friends or an evening at the Canada Games Centre instead.

Keep your quit program in mind and do what you can to protect and nurture it. Remember, when you first learned to ride a bicycle, or drive a car, you had to give it your full attention. But as you practiced and gained more experience, it became easier – so easy that it can feel automatic. Becoming smoke-free is the same – at first it requires all your attention and effort but with practice, living smoke-free will come naturally.

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Here are some options that might help you break the connection between drinking and smoking:

Stay away from alcohol

The obvious first choice is simple: don't drink. Drink cranberry juice with seltzer water or another non-alcoholic drink of your choice. Only you and the bartender will know the difference.

Know your limits

If you do drink, limit the amount you consume and don't get drunk. Have one drink only, or substitute every other drink with a glass of water with lemon. It will dilute the alcohol you've had, keep you hydrated, and will give you something to sip on while socializing.

Plan an escape route

If your friends are smoking close by and it begins to bother you, have a plan of action in mind. Can you ask them not to smoke around you? If not, excuse yourself for a few minutes to go to the bathroom or step outside for some fresh air. Find something else to do while your friends go outside for a smoke. When the urge to smoke hits, the key is to quickly change your focus. Interrupt your thoughts: remind yourself of how far you've come already and all the benefits that being smoke-free brings.

Don't go

If you fear the temptation to drink will be more than you can handle, don't push yourself. Stay at home. There will be more parties next week, next month, and next year. Think of it this way: early on, becoming smoke-free takes a lot of work and focus for most people. In order to succeed, make becoming smoke-free your top priority until you feel comfortable going back into the situations which will trigger an urge to light up.

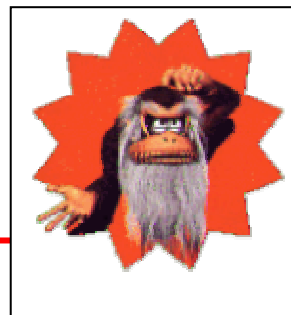
The important thing is to give yourself the time you need to develop strategies to curb the urge to smoke when you have a few drinks. Do the work now, and the day will come when drinking no longer triggers the urge to smoke.

Remember: Quitting smoking is not a sacrifice, it's a gift! You are working to give yourself and your family a better life, and the benefits of being smoke-free are just around the corner.

Becky's QuitPack Feedback

I'm a mother of one, yet a mother of two with a husband that smokes. I had been smoke free for nearly three months when I had a relapse. When I relapsed I realized how much I still needed to be on my feet about this being smoke-free. In the last three months of being smoke-free, I had a breath of air and the energy to finally run on a treadmill, and that's the reason why I am now back on the road to becoming smoke-free. For everyone out there who's quitting or has already quit, keep up the great work, take one day at a time, and remember you're never alone!

I think it would be great if we could have a support group; this would be a great help.



Food for thought...

- Why are cigarettes sold in gas stations when smoking is prohibited there?
- Why do people who smoke while driving a car alone find it necessary to open the car window a little? Does the smoke bother them?
- Do tobacco companies have non-smoking areas?
- Did you know that if all smokers were laid end to end around the world, three quarters of them would drown?

Please send your ideas & input for next month's QuitPack News to health.promotion@gov.yk.ca or call the Smokersline toll-free 1-866-221-8393.