

Try Weedless Wednesday's challenge

By ALEX NEWMAN

So what's your excuse this year? Don't have time, afraid of gaining weight, job too stressful? My don't we have a lot of good reasons to keep on puffing.

Well the National Council on Smoking and Health would say those excuses are not only lousy, but founded on myth as well.

The average smoker, according to a Canada Health Survey takes 50 per cent more sick leave. Smoking consumes anywhere from a low eight minutes a day to 15-30 minutes an hour. Statistics show that 2/3 of those who quit smoking don't gain weight, and that 1/3 actually lose weight because of a change in habits starting with exercise regimens. As for stress, smoking causes anxiety levels to increase. Blood pressure and pulse rate rises, body temperature lowers, all factors that contribute to stress.

Today is Weedless Wednesday, for those of you who have missed the message announced on every form of media. This year, Weedless Wednesday is aimed at all smokers, but at women in particular.

Female focus

Judy Hills, a program coordinator from the York Region Lung Association says women are this year's target because more and more are taking up the habit and cigarette advertising is increasingly aimed at the female market.

Hills works within the school system, organizing prevention programs and talking to classes. From the figures, it appears boys are "putting down" cigarettes, while girls are picking them up.

The focus of prevention programs is placed in the schools because, statistically, that's where it all starts. Many girls complain they're bored, haven't much to do, because sports activities aren't geared to the female student body. Boys seem to be more into sports and fitness, so more teams are organized for them.

As well, many boys have part-time jobs - "to pay for cars to take the girls out in", adds Hills. "When the girls have extra time, they go to the corner restaurant, have a coke and a cigarette."

In certain ethnic backgrounds, where a more traditional view of male and female roles holds, girls see smoking as their only form of



independence and/or rebellion. "Girls, particularly Grades 8, 9, 10, want to appear older, more sophisticated," says Hills. In one Grade 9 co-ed class, none of the boys smoked while several of the girls did. "The boys asked the girls why and the answer was to appeal to boys. When the boys pointed out they hated the smell of smoke," says Hills, "the girls said the boys they wanted to attract were Grade 13's, not their own classmates."

In another class of Grade 10 girls, though, Hills noted several had quit smoking. One because her boyfriend threatened to break off with her; another had been frightened by the lung cancer death of an older family member.

Advertising promotes a positive image of women smokers. "The ads are full of slim, beautiful women, riding bicycles, or enjoying outdoor sports. In group situations, it's the women who smoke, not the men," Hills adds that advertising shows upper-middle class women enjoying the good life while in reality, the higher an individual's income, the less likely she is to smoke, generally.

And surprisingly, a significant number of women over the age of 20 have taken up smoking. In order to "appear tough, strong, and able to compete in the boardroom, women, well entrenched in careers already, are just starting the smoking habit." That's an effort to take control of their lives, but the real control, adds Hills, comes from choosing to quit, not in taking the male lead.

Risk to women

Special risks are taken by women. Lung cancer is expected to surpass breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer death in women in 1988. Women who smoke during pregnancy are subjecting their babies to known health risks. Smoking results in an incredible 6,000 miscarriages in Canada, and about 500 babies die shortly after birth due to the carcinogens they were exposed to during growth stages. Smoking mothers increase risks of premature birth, stillbirth, eye defects, and sudden death syndrome.

A nursing mother who smokes passes on enough nicotine to cause irritability, vomiting and

poor sleeping habits in her baby. Smoking is also thought to be a factor in impaired fertility, earlier onset of menopause (which helps the onset of osteoporosis.)

Three week point

So what is Weedless Wednesday? For those who made no smoking a New Year's resolution, that three week point is a vulnerable one, and former smokers may be lulled into thinking they're past the danger stage. Getting through that first 24 hours without a cigarette, may provide the shove that many smokers need to seriously consider quitting for good. And it's been found that those who stay smoke-free on this Wed. stay that way for at least six months.

Celebrity hotline

What is York Region doing for Weedless Wednesday? In conjunction with the Metro Toronto Lung Association, a celebrity hotline will be held in the lobby of the Sheraton Centre. Volunteers, members of the media, and political personalities will offer their "wit and wisdom" to the callers

who seek help.

Nana Rosenberger, of the York Region Interagency Council on Smoking and Health, will be "manning" a special hotline just for York region.

The volunteers have been trained to prepare for the questions. They will have information about smoke cessation clinics, anti-smoking by-laws, policies for the workplace, facts on smoking and pregnancy.

Celebrities will include Jay Nelson, Terry McElligott, Roger Ashby, Judy Haladay, Gary Lautens, Sandy Hoyt, Andy Barry, etc. As well Mayors Mel Lastman, Alan Tonks, Dave Johnston, and Ontario's minister of Health, Richard Schabas, will be on the line.

Countdown successful

York Region holds Countdown, a five week cessation program, that so far has been very successful. An additional program just for women is to be held in York Region.

Many corporations are providing these programs to employees in an effort to encourage them, as well as clean up the workplace air. With the smoke in the workplace law now in effect, a large portion of senior management is also considering taking the programs themselves to set examples for the employees.

York Region puts out a self-help booklet, with step-by-step procedures for quitting smoking on your own.

Kiddie packs

Canada Health Attitudes discovered that 1/2 of Canadian schoolchildren, by age 12, had experimented with cigarettes and 1/4 were smoking on a daily basis. By 1985, thanks in part to smoke cessation or prevention programs in the schools, the numbers of students smoking declined from 32.3 per cent (1978) to 19.6 per cent (1985). The other contributing factor was cost. Hills says anti-smoking groups were up in arms when the tobacco manufacturers came out with kiddie packs - 1/2 size at half the cost. She says she hasn't seen them lately. York Region has a Countdown for Youth program as well.

Hotline numbers: Celebrity Hotline, Toronto, 362-8145; York Region, 773-6184.

Limericks help kick the smoking habit

Weekender January 9 invited readers to send in their limericks on smoking for publication on Weedless Wednesday (today). Each lyricist published wins a Solid Gold Coupon booklet with savings worth hundreds of dollars. We hope readers will find the rhymes entertaining as well as motivating. Come to the Economist and Sun office at 9 Heritage Rd. and claim your prize.

Here lies a young yuppie named Max
Who said, "Smoking sure helps me relax!"
He finally succeeded,
Got more rest than he needed -
By daily consuming two packs.

Alex Williams
Markham

There was a young smoker named Kate,
said "I'll quit, but today's not the date."
But her lungs got too dirty,
That before she turned thirty
She died. Now she's quit, but too late.

Sharon Baxter
Stouffville

On the 20th Lynne went Weedless
And discovered "Smoking's
Needless"
She's since tossed away
Her two packs a day
And hopes you do, when you read
this.

Lynne Plant
Markham

The young girls in this town are so
pretty,
Their faces could light up the city.
But too many, it seems,
Have smoke in their dreams.
Early graves would seem such a
pity.

Dave Baxter
Stouffville

For smoking you think I'm a wit
If I don't give them up soon you
will split.
Well get off my back
It ain't guilt I lack
Then I might just surprise you
and quit.

Diane Percy
Markham

This dependence I can't seem to
sever
And as much as I've tried - I might
never...
So familiar to me
I might never be free
Like your nagging, it goes on
forever!

There once was a man from
Cachet
Who used to smoke three packs a
day.
But his tombstone now reads
"If t'weren't for those weeds
I'd not be here rotting away!"

Anne-Marie Marcell
Markham

Quit smoking and do us a favor
Plus, soon you'll be able to savor.
Soot-free clothes and air
Fresh breath and clean hair
And your breath will no longer be
labored

Anne-Marie Marcell
Markham

There was a girl called Maybel-
line
Who had a fix for nicotine
They said "It's a crime!"
She's old 'fore her time
And with her no man would be
seen.

Connie Clow
Markham

In a life spent with people who
puff,
The odd thing (and this is no guff)
I always said, "No!"
Until two years ago -
Now I'm ready to holler,
"Enough!"

Margaret Stapley
Stouffville

When the groom found his bride in
their bed
With a war surplus mask on her
head,
She said, "I'm afraid that I'll
choke.
On your second hand smoke
And I'd rather be ugly than
dead."

Before you reach for a nicotine fix
Why not give that habit the kicks,
And realize the stuff
Inhaled with each puff
Fills your lungs with an unhealthy
mix.

There once was a fellow named
Yogi
Who spent younger years smok-
ing stogies.
But luckily he quit
To feel healthy and fit,
He's now, as you'd say, an old
fogey.

Donna Lee Buczkowski
Markham

I smoked because I thought it
looked cool
Sometimes I can be such a fool.
It causes bad breath
And brings early death.
Because it is cancer's tool.

Lori Myers
Unionville

I feel ten years younger today
Because I put my cigarettes
away.
Playing sports with my friends
The fun never ends
When your lungs are with you to
stay.

Peter Myers
Unionville

I pour out my coffee and light up
Inhale and enjoy 'til the last puff.
Sensation so pleasin'
I'll need a good reason
To quit and forego all that good
stuff.

It's scary the things they are
learning
That it's not just my money that's
burning.
So Wednesday I'll quit
"Though a nicotine fit
Will undoubtedly fill me with
yearning."

Val Tibbenham
Unionville

She sat in a room all alone
Full of smoke that was all her
own.
She puffed on that fag
And soon drag by drag
She entered the cancer death
zone.

Ronald Hudson
Markham