

Anne's Story

Imagine being afraid to go out in crowds in case someone passes along an illness. That's the reality that Anne Duffy faces every day, living with severe asthma and COPD that literally take her breath away.

"Every time I have a cough or sneeze I almost panic," says the 61-year-old Orillia woman. "I worry is this going to be the start of something bigger?"

And she has reason to be concerned. Her last attack had her hospitalized, sick and off work for four weeks.

Anne's story starts off much the same as it has for many people. She remembers starting smoking when she was in her teens, then quitting to be a good role model for her young daughters and then starting again when her career took off and her job became stressful.

Within about 12 years of starting to smoke again, Anne had to be hospitalized when she had difficulty with her breathing. She was diagnosed with asthma but she wasn't advised to stop smoking because she wasn't considered a heavy smoker.

"I didn't put two and two together until after the second or third time I was hospitalized that it was my smoking," she says. "By then I had become a severe asthmatic and I realized I had to quit."

But there was more bad news to come. While being treated for her asthma, she was also diagnosed with COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) and told there was a 99-per-cent chance it was caused by her smoking.

"All of a sudden, I have three puffers every single day. I'm monitored by my doctor. I'm monitored by a lung specialist. I take a variety of pills, and the way I live has been altered. It has definitely affected my quality of life."

At only 61, Anne is a young grandma, and she says it breaks her heart that she can't play with her "beautiful wonderful grandchildren" the way she would like to.

Her tip for anyone trying to quit is to change the unhealthy habit for a healthy one. For her it was knitting, to keep her hands busy and her mind off smoking. She also used a "quit smoking" app on her phone to help her track her days smoke free and the health improvements occurring each day she was smoke free.

"My smoke-free days were building up and the app encouraged me to keep going. I didn't want to have to start over and lose all the time I had built up so I just kept it up."

Anne quit smoking and so can you.



If you need help to get started, **call Health Connection to find free supports in the community at 1-877-721-7520** Monday through Friday. Visit the **Tobacco-Free Chatter Facebook page** and hear from others in Simcoe Muskoka who have quit or are working to become tobacco free.