



Allyson says fewer wrinkles and whiter teeth are added bonuses of quitting.

Not relying on luck! Allyson Snelling is no longer relying on luck to stay healthy and the Huntsville resident says she's happy she did it before it ran out.

In the late 1990s as a high school student, she started smoking because everyone else was doing it. That began a 20-year addiction to tobacco – the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Canada. While trading her health for tobacco didn't worry her as a teen, she says her job at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare working with people who are dedicated to saving lives made her start questioning her decision to continue to smoke.

"I was very much a closet smoker. I felt the social stigma. I was ashamed to let people at the hospital see me smoking," Snelling says. "Even among my friends, a lot of my friends were quitting and I was starting to become the last one who still smoked."

Up to that point luck had been on her side. She had not had experienced any major health problems from smoking "except some phlegm in my throat, but no bad cough or anything like that."

Then 10 months ago she decided it was her time to do more than rely on luck to stay healthy and enjoy life. She made a commitment to herself to take back her control. She mentally prepared for it. She took part in a health unit STOP workshop to learn how to quit successfully, started using nicotine patches, signed up for Smokers' Helpline telephone support (1-877-513-5333), and then to keep herself honest, shared the news with her friends and co-workers.

She credits the many supports she put in place for helping her break her addiction.

"I knew it wasn't going to be easy and I wanted to make it as easy on myself as possible. I didn't need the stress of doing it without help. I knew I needed the help and I told myself I am going to take the help."

As she moves closer to her first year anniversary as a nonsmoker, Snelling says her energy level is much better, she's back in control and "it's a great feeling to have."

She says she quit for her health but will also enjoy other benefits of being smoke free such as fewer wrinkles, whiter teeth, and the added bonus – it's good for her dating life!



Need help to get started on your quit journey? Call Health Connection weekdays 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

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