

# SOURCE LINES

## A Perfect Opportunity to Stop Smoking

**New Smoking Legislation:** At 12:01 a.m. on May 31, 2006, new smoking bans will come into effect in Ontario and Quebec. These bans will prohibit smoking in all enclosed public places and workplaces. The only exception to this rule is a provision that allows for "smoking shelters," which are defined as non-serviced areas consisting of no more than two walls and a roof. Properly constructed indoor smoking areas for employees will be permitted for an additional two years, but will be banned effective May 31, 2008.



Slowly but surely the rules of the smoking game are making it harder and harder to light up. Recent changes about where we can smoke are part of a comprehensive health reform agenda to address the impact of smoking on individual's health and the health of society as a whole by: (1) preventing young people from starting to smoke, (2) protecting people from environmental tobacco smoke, and (3) providing support for smoke cessation.

There is good reason for the rule changes. Cigarette smoking is the number one cause of preventable illness and death in Canada. Each year 45,000 Canadians die prematurely because of smoking. This is bad.

However, the harder it is to light up the more people think about quitting. Today almost 54% of current smokers in Canada say they are thinking about becoming smoke-free within the next six months. 57% of Canadian smokers have already quit. This is a good.

In fact, thinking about making changes is a crucial step on the way to making significant change.

And ending an addiction to cigarettes is a big-time change. For many of us, it is the toughest battle we'll ever fight. The powerfully mood-altering and addictive nature of nicotine hooks us to "the only legally available consumer product that kills through normal use." No other consumer product is as dangerous or kills as many people as tobacco. In addition to increasing risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, respiratory problems and other deadly diseases smokers are:

- ◇ 70% more likely to develop root canal infections compared to non-smokers
- ◇ Twice as likely to lose their teeth
- ◇ More likely to have increased impotence (erectile dysfunction in males) at rates of 350% increase for males in their 40's and 600% in their 50's
- ◇ Premature wrinkles
- ◇ Premature gray hair
- ◇ Twice as likely to become bald

The good news is that thousands of people are successful at quitting smoking forever. Their *changing for good* is usually achieved after an up and down struggle that we will look at in a minute. But first, here is some

interesting propaganda to encourage butting-out.



The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada reports that just one smoke-free week can launch you into a lifetime of healthy living. Just try butting out for one week and you'll be amazed at how much better you feel in a short time.

Here are some of the immediate benefits you can look forward to:

- ◇ Within 8 hours, the level of carbon monoxide in your body decreases and oxygen increases to normal levels
- ◇ Within 48 hours your sense of smell and taste improve and return to normal
- ◇ Within 2 days your risk of heart attack begins to decrease
- ◇ Within 3 days your lung capacity increases making breathing easier
- ◇ Within one year your risk of heart attack is cut in half.

Mark Twain once said " It's easy to quit smoking. I've done it hundreds of times." Well, the truth is that many or most of us who have quit-for-good have our share of stories of failures along the way to success. Contemplating quitting smoking, including identifying the benefits, best strategies, the obstacles and the right time, are all good things to do. Thinking about changing helps raise our awareness of the benefits of changing and can increase our motivation to change. However, try to avoid the following:

- ◇ Waiting until you are absolutely sure that it is worth the effort to quit. People can say, "Well, I've smoked for all these years and I guess whatever damage I've caused my health has already been done." The fact is it's never too late to benefit.
- ◇ Waiting for the magic moment to arrive that will feel like the perfect time to make the change. Magic moments almost never come. Change is work not magic.
- ◇ Dreaming about a future that will make changing unnecessary. For example, thinking that some day there will be a cure for lung cancer that will make it possible to put off quitting. This is close to Einstein's definition of craziness which is something like *doing the same thing we've always done but expecting a different result that we always get.*

Smoking is a nasty thing. If you're a smoker with any thoughts of quitting we suggest discussing this with your family doctor who can provide you with information and access to smoke cessation aids that can increase your chances of success. Also, there is a wealth of information on the website of the **Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada** at [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca). The entire site offers a rich source of information and strategies for healthy living, including planning for and quitting smoking.

Good Luck and Don't Give Up Trying

"I have every sympathy with people who are so horrified by what they have read about the effects of smoking that they have given up reading." -- Henry G. Strauss, 1892-1974

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