

Jimmy is 10 years smokefree

200,000 CIGARETTES

FIONA Boyle, Smoking Cessation Advisor, Donegal Community recently caught up with Jimmy Kavanagh, a former client of the Smoking Cessation Programme, for a cuppa as he celebrated 10 years since he quit smoking which means, for him, that he has not smoked around 200,000 cigarettes.

Jimmy had made several attempts to quit smoking and had managed some success - once for two years and once for three years. On both occasions, he relapsed while out watching football in the pub. He confided this week that he probably smoked up to 60 cigarettes per day and not the 30 to 40 that he reported at the time.

He used to get up in the middle of the night to smoke and would normally have had seven cigarettes taken before starting work in the morning. He had been smoking for around 30 years and his health was his main reason for quitting as he was having chest infections.

As is very common, Jimmy's main concern about quitting was fear of failure. At the time, Fiona explained that most clients had this as their main concern, and that even if you stop smoking for a short period of time, the chances are that you will learn something that will help you on your next attempt. Additionally, the majority of people make between 5 and 10 quit attempts before they become successful especially if they are doing it by themselves. Once motivated to quit, success is more likely if appropriate treatments are used ie Champix tablets, patches, mist etc. and if Smoking Cessation Services are used also.

Jimmy's Carbon Monoxide level (breath test) at his initial appointment was 18ppm in the breath and 3.2pc in the blood. Normal is 2ppm in the breath and <1pc in the blood. Jimmy was advised that this test would be taken at each clinic appointment.

Then on October 4th, Jimmy quit smoking. He used Champix tablets as his chosen treatment and started them a week before quitting. Jimmy found drinking water, distraction and not dwelling on it very helpful in helping him deal with the cravings he experienced. Below is a snapshot of his experience on quitting over the first 12 months.

IN THE FIRST WEEK

IN the first week, he found that his appetite

increased and he started eating three meals a day which included breakfast for the first time in years. He reported thinking about the cigarettes more than craving them and he noticed that his heartburn had improved.

He was more alert and didn't need as much sleep. His sense of smell improved and started to notice stale smells for the first time. More money was available and started a new habit of saving €12 into a tin every day. If he didn't have the correct money, he would go over to John Gormley's shop and get the correct amount and put it in. He was delighted with himself and his wife and family were very happy too. He started going to the gym each night which was helpful. He drank less tea and more water and continued to walk everywhere. He followed Fiona's advice that when anyone offered a cigarette politely declined saying 'No thanks I don't smoke' and found that this reinforced his decision in his own mind.

Carbon Monoxide level was 1ppm in the breath and 0.8pc in the blood which is the normal level in a non-smoker.

IN THE FIRST MONTH

THE yellow finger stains were gone, teeth stains were clearing and the sense of taste and smell improved resulting in food tasting better. The house was cleaner, smokers cough was gone, breathing much better and he had saved €264. He gained 2lbs in weight.

WITHIN 6 WEEKS

ALL withdrawals were gone and he felt life was very good. He was very motivated and confident to remain quit and felt life was now normal as a non-smoker. Jimmy was feeling fitter, eating and sleeping better. He even managed a social occasion as a non-smoker and €528 was saved.

4 MONTHS

HE lost some of the weight gained. He was still saving money and thinking of going on a holiday.

7 MONTHS

HE was smokefree since quit day and feels very confident and motivated to remain a non-smoker. Gained about 1 stone in weight but is not too bothered by it. Exercising more and feeling much better. Feels stronger, breathing and energy much better, eating healthily and having

breakfast each day. Breath tastes and smells better. More in control of his life

1 YEAR REVIEW

JIMMY remained smoke free for the previous 12 months. He was not experiencing any withdrawals other than weight gain and Body Mass Index was 26 which is only slightly above the recommended 20 to 25.

Jimmy reported more than 25 benefits since quitting including:

- Best thing has ever done for himself and very proud
- Family are very proud
- Feels great - increased energy, better breathing and no cough
- Dislikes stale smell, clothes fresher and last longer between washes
- Breath tastes and smells fresher
- More efficient, more time at work to do things
- Eating better, enjoying food and having a breakfast
- Started conditioning training
- More money available
- Sense of smell and taste better.
- Regained control of his life.
- House is smokefree for the last year and no one is passive smoking either
- Has over €3000 saved since quitting

Jimmy was presented with his One Year Quit Certificate.

ADVICE TO OTHERS

JIMMY noted, "After the smoking ban in 2004 it made you think about your smoking. You started to feel isolated as a smoker which is not a nice feeling but it helps you to think about smoking in a different way."

Even though at the time he felt demoralised when he returned to smoking, he felt that his previous quit attempts helped him to be better prepared for this quit, especially regarding watching football matches in the pub.

The following are his tips for others when thinking about quitting:

- Relapse is normal and you can learn from it - if at first you don't succeed try again
- It helps if you can get yourself mentally ready
- It wasn't as hard as I thought it was going

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BETTER OFF

to be –the hardest part was getting the thinking right

- Try not to think of it as a sacrifice and that you are giving something up – it's more about taking something back as it's the biggest favour you'll ever do for yourself
 - Seeing Fiona every few weeks helped because you knew there was someone rooting for you and you didn't want to let them down. Having the Carbon Monoxide test each visit also helped to keep you going
- Recently, Jimmy was interviewed by Shaun Doherty on Highland Radio about his achievement which got a great response on air and as a result

a local woman contacted Jimmy the day after the radio interview to say that she was inspired by it. This lady has now quit and is out walking each day and is keeping in contact with Jimmy by Facebook. It shows that though quitting smoking can be difficult, the more support that a person can get from the people around them and trained professionals, the more likely they are to quit.

If this story has inspired you to think about quitting smoking and if you would like free confidential support at one of the 13 clinics throughout Donegal then please contact either Fiona Boyle on 087-2514790 or Catherine Coleman on 086-0492465. You are 10 times



more likely to quit smoking if you use this service. Thanks again to Jimmy for allowing his story to be told.

WE CAN QUIT – WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN TO KICK THE HABIT

THE Irish Cancer Society's 'We Can Quit' programme, featured in the summer issue of Health Matters, is continuing to attract women in Cork and Dublin who are determined to quit smoking.

'We Can Quit' is a free, community based 12-week support programme for women who want to quit smoking. It offers women the opportunity to develop skills, build confidence and share experiences with each other in a friendly and supportive group environment, where everyone understands what they are going through. The programme also offers free nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), a weekly smoking cessation group and one to one support.

This year will see courses in a total of 10 locations being completed by the end of this year, with extra locations being added next year. Over the course of 2015 and 2016, the programme has had a total of 248 women participate in courses in Fettercairn, Blakestown, Swords, Coolock, Kilmore, Rialto & Bluebell in Dublin and Mallow, Mayfield and Ballyphehane/Togher in Cork.

Deciding to quit smoking is no easy feat, as Carolyn Roche from Tallaght knows only too well. Carolyn previously tried to stop smoking on two other occasions. This time, Carolyn was determined to quit and went along to her local 'We Can Quit' programme at Fettercairn in July of this year. Since then Carolyn has managed to battle through the highs and lows and is still off the cigarettes. In fact, Carolyn went on to be an ambassador at the Tallaght Health and Wellbeing Week.

Speaking about the programme, Carolyn said, "I heard about the programme at the Community Centre in Tallaght where I volunteer and at the time I was smoking two packs of

cigarettes a day. It was my third time trying to give up and the first two times I had continued smoking even with the nicotine patches on me."

"I was determined to do it this time and I took it one hour at a time. I thought of the fact that when anyone gets on an airplane to go anywhere, they can't smoke for hours at a time and that's a good way to approach it. If I can do without them when I'm flying somewhere, I can do it all of the time.

"The course was brilliant, especially the facilitator Imelda. I was given as much support and time as I needed and she often took me to the side and explained things one to one. All of the women in the group supported each other and afterwards we started a Facebook group and we still meet up for coffee and a chat.

"My last cigarette was on May 22nd, so I'm almost five months off the cigarettes now and I am delighted with myself. I haven't had an easy time recently and was in hospital for a while, but I

didn't go back on the cigarettes, even though at times I was tempted. I keep thinking of that plane, and I just take it one hour at a time."

2017 HSE / 'WE CAN QUIT' TRAINING

THE We Can Quit Programme uses a co-facilitation model between community workers and HSE practitioners who are working with women and families at CHO area level.

In order to run more courses, the Irish Cancer Society is urging HSE practitioners, working at CHO level in Cork and South Dublin who think this programme would be relevant to their work, to contact them.

For anyone interested in taking part in HSE and Irish Cancer Society facilitator training in the new year, please contact Rachel Burke at rburke@irishcancer.ie or 01-2316669, or visit the webpage at www.cancer.ie/we-can-quit for more information on courses.



Carolyn Roche (centre), with Lavinia Coti and Aisling McGeady at the 'We Can Quit' graduation ceremony in Tallaght. PHOTO: ANDRES POVEDA PHOTOGRAPHY