

Up In Smoke

Smoking has lost steam over the past decade, but 61 percent of surveyed non-smokers said they had taken a drag at least once during their lifetimes

By Mara Lee
Staff Writer

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema And May Complicate Pregnancy. SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Smoking Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks To Your Health.

You've come a long way, baby, since the days of guilt-free smoking. Even though it seems as if every year smokers lose more social acceptance and the non-smoking lobby gains more power, smokers still are a presence on campus.

The majority of campus doesn't smoke, but most non-smokers answering a Daily Tar Heel survey — about 61 percent — have tried it at one point.

Many of them tried a puff when they were very young, which "cured" them for life. One man said, "I tried it with a cousin in a garage when I was 7 or 8." Other non-smokers said they tried it in their teens. One said, "It was more a rebellion thing than in social situations. I used to walk alone at night, smoking."

The hook

Most smokers started in either the 15- to 16-year-old or 18- to 20-year-old range. Peer pressure was the biggest reason people tried smoking, with curiosity the second. Sometimes they tied in. "Everybody I knew smoked. They enjoyed it so much, I wanted to see what it was all about," one survey respondent said.

Peer pressure often bore down most at parties, for both occasional smokers and regulars. "Smoking and drinking kind of went together. That was the big social thing to do," one light smoker said.

Steed McCotter, a freshman from Raleigh, said, "I started small at social occasions, probably just because everyone around me was smoking." Now he smokes half a pack to a pack a day.

Stephanie Earls, a sophomore from Berkeley Springs, W. Va., said, "There's not much else to do at parties when you're not talking to someone — and I liked the way a cigarette looked in my hand."

Boredom often factored into regular smokers' decisions to try smoking, es-

pecially those who started at age 14 or younger.

Many smokers couldn't find a reason why they started.

A buzz or head-rush was mentioned as a motivation by some smokers, as was stress.

A few smokers said family members' smoking influenced them. One man said, "My parents, my friends, my older siblings, most everybody in the community smoked."

A few smokers named esoteric reasons. One occasional smoker started because of "funky-looking cigarettes with imported tobacco. It's an international thing, to be one with the planet. It's walking on the razor's edge of foolishness and false notions of sophistication."

"I wanted to blow smoke rings and put smoke in a bubble," another smoker said.

The line and sinker

Once they tried, some people kept smoking — addiction was the number one reason. Many smokers said they smoked because they liked it, and then added reluctantly that they were addicted. "I smoke because I enjoy it," a smoker said. "Addiction is probably in there somewhere too."

Earls said, "I smoke because I like it. I like the smell. Habit."

But some smokers admitted up front they were addicted. Maria Weinrich, a freshman English major from Columbia, S.C., said she smoked because, "I'm an addict — and stress."

One smoker said, "I can't do my homework unless I have a cigarette in my hand."

One occasional smoker tried to explain his continued smoking. "I don't think I have a nicotine addiction, more of a psychological addiction," he said.

Many smokers said smoking was a crutch to help them deal with stress. Doug Baldwin, a freshman drama major from Jacksonville, said, "It calms my nerves."

Carter Nixon, a sophomore psychology major from Narragansett, R.I., smoked for several years, but has quit for almost two. "I definitely crave a cigarette in stressful situations," he said. "Anything happens I'm upset about, I'll start rationalizing that I can have one."

"It gives me a sense of security," one

smoker said. "I use it when I change moods. It's stimulating."

Many smokers said they enjoyed smoking because of the taste, but many also couldn't put a finger on why they still smoked. "I don't know exactly what I enjoy about it," one said.

"There's no reason not to," one smoker said.

Surgeon General's Warning

No matter how many cigarettes smokers have a day, most agreed they see an effect on their health. Almost 50 percent of smokers surveyed smoke half of a pack to a pack a day. About the same number smoke less than a pack a day. Only one-sixth of the smokers smoke more than a pack a day.

Being short of breath or having more serious, longer-lasting illnesses were the immediate effects smokers noticed.



One occasional smoker said he saw a direct result the next day, "It makes you feel bad, coughing, wheezing the day after."

Earls said, "I've had a cold since December, so that might have something to do with it."

One smoker said he had bronchitis, and at other times his lungs were sore.

Baldwin, who was on his first day of quitting at the time of the interview, said, "I'm concerned about the health risk involved with smoking, but right now my major concern is the financial burden it's put on me. I realize that sounds kind of careless, but I've denied the health risk to myself for a while."

"I have asthma, allergies, and I'm allergic to cigarette smoke already. In a sense, my allergy to smoke has been desensitized."

Quitting

The majority of smokers have tried to quit at least once, and most have tried

several times. One sighed, "Six or eight times." Smokers were successful for as short as several hours and as long as six months. Most smokers' success rates tended to cluster around the two to three days range, though sometimes a two week to a month success was mentioned.

McCotter said a half-day was all he had been able to manage. "All you can think about is a cigarette. You are not listening to what people are saying to you. All you can think about is somehow getting a cigarette."

A drama major said, "I quit every now and then when I'm working on a show. I just chew a lot of gum, eat lots of candy."

Baldwin said, "I've only been smoking two months. I tried to quit one other time — for 15 hours. When I was sitting around doing nothing, I craved one. I want a cigarette, but I'm not grumpy about it."

One non-smoker quit after almost three years. "I got sick of being sick all the time," he said. "Once I decided, I only wanted them on occasion."

Many described themselves as edgy and grumpy while quitting. Weight gain was a concern for one woman. "I was nervous, I ate too much," she said.

Nixon said he felt the effects of quitting at first. "I had major withdrawal symptoms. I was tired, irritated, felt very unhealthy. Physically and psychologically, I felt really bad."

Would you mind?

Almost half of the surveyed smokers had been asked not to light up at one time, and those who hadn't often asked permission before smoking. Weinrich said, "I always ask the people around me before I do it."

Most smokers said being asked not to smoke doesn't bother them, though a few said it does in certain cases. "In Lenoir, people are really rude about it," one said. "Excuse me, this isn't the smoking section." And they're in the first table in the non-smoking section.

McCotter said, "It doesn't bother me if I have someplace to go." But he had some problems in Carmichael. "I didn't smoke in my room because of my roommate, I couldn't smoke in the building. After I kept asking, they gave us the downstairs lounge."

"There are 24-hour non-smoking hours in the five other lounges, and then people ask me, 'Could you please not smoke,' and that's when I say, 'I would, but this is the only place in my building where I can smoke.'"

One occasional smoker said he felt guilty if someone asked him not to smoke. "I feel really self-conscious, like I should've asked first."

Exactly half of the respondents said they had asked someone not to smoke before. Many replied an emphatic yes. "Hell, yeah," one said. "All the time," another non-smoker said.

Second-hand smoke bothers the vast majority of surveyed students, but most of them spoke of discomfort rather than health concerns. Even some occasional smokers said second-hand smoke bothers them. Many students strongly expressed dislike. "It bothers me immensely. It annoys the shit out of me," one person allergic to smoke said. People with contacts and allergies were especially sensitive.

Daniel Ingram, a senior English major from Chapel Hill, said, "It's dangerous. It smells bad. It makes me smell bad. It could kill me. It could kill them."

No Smoking

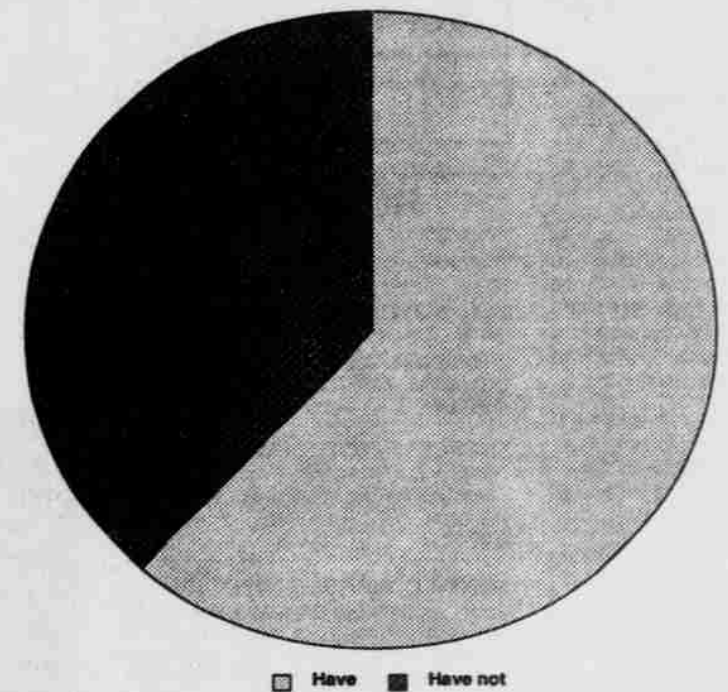
As the non-smoking lobby gains support, more restrictions are imposed

110 people answered the survey from the January 30 edition of The Daily Tar Heel. Among the questions readers were asked:

Have you ever smoked?

The 70 non-smokers answered:

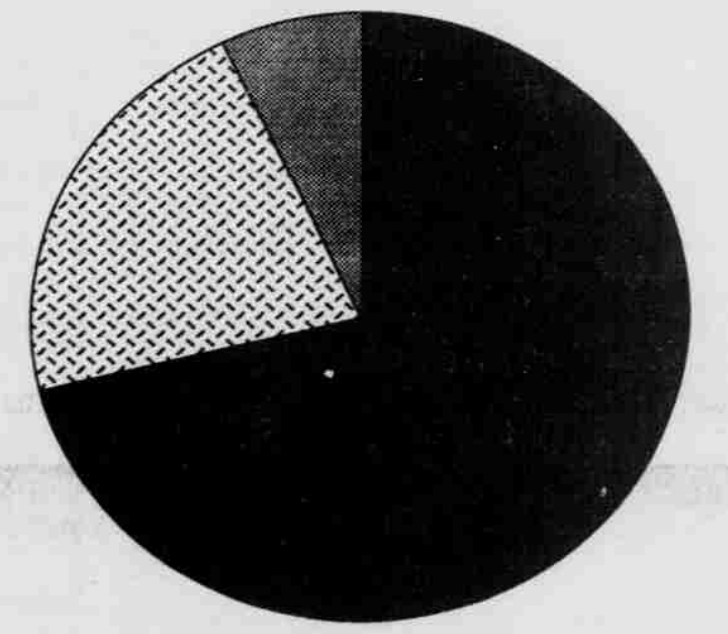
61% - HAVE 39% - HAVE NOT



Do you think there should be a campus-wide smoking ban in all academic buildings?

71% - YES 22% - NO

7% - DON'T KNOW



on smoking. Most college students can't remember when cigarette ads were allowed on television. Smoking in most public transportation is restricted, and it has been prohibited in classrooms since the mid '70s.

More recent restrictions, like on domestic flights and mandatory non-smoking sections in restaurants, continue the trend. Many cities already have such laws, and Chapel Hill is considering adding one. On this campus, some academic buildings are smoke-free, as is the Undergraduate Library.

More than 70 percent of all respondents supported a campus-wide smoking ban in academic buildings, including all libraries.

Nixon said, "I wouldn't care. Smoking's an awful thing. People shouldn't be doing it."

McCotter said, "I would have a hard time with it being banned in the libraries. Someplace I've got to be for any length of time is difficult."

Weinrich said, "I don't think it makes any sense, and I don't think it's enforceable, and I don't think it would work."

"It's not a reasonable compromise, considering how many smokers there are," one non-smoker said.

Another non-smoker brought up the importance of tobacco to the North Carolina economy. "It's unthinkable in a state and University so rich in tobacco heritage and money. It's unconstitutional. I wish I smoked so I could piss off all the anti-smoking idiots."

One smoker said, "There's nothing advantageous to it. It's very self-centered and very egotistical to feel that way."

Some people went a step further, saying smoking should be banned in all public buildings, though 65 percent said that was too extreme.

Ingram supported the ban for all public buildings. "Second-hand smoke impinges on the right of non-smokers to not breathe in carcinogens."

One smoker who supported the ban said, "I just don't think other people should have to be subjected to smoke. Even when I smoke in bars, I don't like having to breathe it in. And your clothes stink."

Many non-smokers said that although they were irritated by smoke, they thought civil liberties were more important.

Many people instead suggested more barriers between smoking and non-smoking sections, or even separate rooms. "I think there should be smoking areas, because people who don't smoke have a right not to be around it, but I don't think you should have to go outside," Weinrich said.

Another smoker said, "What you're talking about is a lot of angry, frustrated people. People have a right not to be exposed to it, that's why non-smoking sections are a good idea."

McCotter reminded banning proponents that cigarettes are legal. "We've been given a legal right to smoke."

"We were given the right to become addicted to something. Non-smokers have been led to believe that if I want to quit smoking, all I have to do is put out my cigarette and never pick it up again."

"It's a true addiction. It's not that easy. I think if you want to do an all-campus smoking ban, you also need to do a recovery program."



Almost 50 percent of smokers surveyed smoke from half a pack to a pack a day.

DTH/Jim Holm

Nicorette gum, cold turkey are ways UNC students kick the smoking habit

By Scott Maxwell
Staff Writer

Chelsea Hoke, a junior history major from Chapel Hill, smoked for six years. Sarah Dessen, a sophomore English major also from Chapel Hill, began in ninth grade.

Both up to a pack a day, now neither of them smokes at all.

More and more, people are quitting smoking, and according to Glen Martin, assistant director of the UNC counseling center, there are a number of options for those smokers that want to quit.

"The American Cancer Society and the American Lung Association both offer programs for smokers who want to quit," Martin said.

Until last semester, the Wellness Resource Center and the counseling center offered a program for students interested in quitting, called the Fresh Start program. The group met for four sessions for about an hour and a half.

Right now, the University is not sponsoring programs for students interested in quitting smoking, but according to Martin, the American Cancer Society's Fresh Start program and the American Lung Association's self-

help booklets are viable options.

Martin also said he would be implementing another Fresh Start program in April for both area residents and students. Those interested can contact the counseling center.

One prescription option for smokers ready to quit is the Nicorette drug.

Fran Whaley, a pharmacist at the Student Health Services, said Nicorette was a chewing gum that provides nicotine to those actually addicted.

The idea, Whaley explained, is to start with about 10-12 pieces of gum a day at first and then take less each day.

"Nicorette has had variable success,"

Whaley said. The drug costs about \$25 for 96 pieces and has to be prescribed by a doctor.

Both Hoke and Dessen said they quit smoking without the aid of any drugs or programs and were very successful.

"I knew I had to quit," Dessen said. "I got tired after walking short distances, and my family has a history of health problems."

When asked why she started smoking, Dessen said, "I guess it was just the cool thing to do, as well as something to do."

It was at 6:46 p.m. on May 21, 1990

that Dessen stopped smoking.

"I think that the best way to quit is cold turkey," said Dessen. "I did it on my own. I used will power, and will power's free."

Hoke quit cold turkey as well, but it wasn't the first time she tried.

"I quit because it's awful for you," Hoke said. "I finally decided that I wasn't afraid."

Hoke said she felt better after quitting, both physically and emotionally. "I'm not sick anymore, and I am in much better physical condition," Hoke said. "I also have more money, and my

self-image has changed. I used to be constantly depressed and wear a lot of black."

Hoke said her friends helped her a lot too during her first non-smoking period. "They were really supportive," she said. "They took me out to celebrate my quitting."

"I'm really glad I quit. I think that others can too."

Both Hoke and Dessen said that if smokers really wanted to stop, they were sure that they could, whether they used some of the programs available or quit on their own.