

# Patch of hope cuts through the haze of smoke addiction

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## ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

I felt absolutely terrible about my smoking, or at least more so than before, so I resolved to find a way to quit. I tried willpower with light results followed by heavier smoking. I tried gum, I tried squeeze stress balls and I even tried not smoking around them but everything failed – until someone suggested the patch, not out of annoyance for my habit but for genuine concern. The concern can be summed up this way: here I am 30 years old and I've spent 15 of those years smoking. That scared me enough to give it one last try.

I talked over quitting methods quite a bit and did a bit of figuring. There are actually two popular methods doctors like to use to get a patient to quit smoking, the anti-depressant Zyban and the nicotine patch. I was unable to take the Zyban and I had already tried the gum before. So it looked like the patch was my only choice.

The funny thing is that a person can actually get addicted to the patch. If that happens, the doctor told me, I should keep using the patch and not go back to smoking. Why? The patch doesn't release the deadly carbon monoxide gas into your lungs.

## TESTO COMPLETO

Late last summer I found myself in a sticky predicament. I was smoking far more than normal and my lungs were starting to feel it.

On top of that, my mother was diagnosed with a lung ailment and had to be put on oxygen. My dad had quit smoking years before and so had she. But never had a time been where it seemed more important that they be away from smoking. My dad could hardly stand the smell and the oxygen could not stand the flame.

I felt absolutely terrible about my smoking, or at least more so than before, so I resolved to find a way to quit. I tried willpower with light results followed by heavier smoking. I tried gum, I tried squeeze stress balls and I even tried not smoking around them but everything failed – until someone suggested the patch, not out of annoyance for my habit but for genuine concern. The concern can be summed up this way: here I am 30 years old and I've spent 15 of those years smoking. That scared me enough to give it one last try.

I talked over quitting methods quite a bit and did a bit of figuring. There are actually two popular methods doctors like to use to get a patient to quit smoking, the anti-depressant Zyban and the nicotine patch. I was unable to take the Zyban and I had already tried the gum before. So it looked like the patch was my only choice.

I was a bit worried about the cost of the patch but the way the doctor explained it made a lot of sense. First, he said, "don't smoke while you are using the patch." Then he said: "Using the patch costs about what smoking does."

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gas into your lungs.

So the day came and I was ready. I started with the strongest patch since I was a heavy smoker.

I had armed myself because every time I read a magazine that had stuff in it about smoking, or found myself in the lobby of a doctor's office, I took all the information I could get about quitting this lethal habit.

Anyone just a bit smarter than me could probably take an Alberta Lung Association course to quit smoking and combine that with the taking of the patch.

It has been almost four months now since I started on the patch and I still have yet to smoke a single cigarette. I think the big thing for me managing to quit after trying a number of times over the years is that now things started to look serious for me.

I could envision a grisly end to my life from lung cancer or heart disease. Maybe the new cigarette warnings did me good with all of their fear tactics. All I know now is that I have kicked a habit that was costing me well over \$1,500 a year. And I am just a little bit less unwelcome when I go to the homes of non-smoking friends.

Anyone wishing to learn more can contact their doctor and the Alberta Lung Association for more information. The Alberta Lung Association can be reached at 407-6819 or 1-800-661-5864. The Internet also has a wealth of stop-smoking information.

Are you inspired to write about your own experiences? Voices offers a forum for writers to tell a personal story in submissions of up to 750 words. If we publish your piece, along with your photo, we'll give you a \$50 honorarium. Write to Voices, Edmonton Journal Newsroom, Box 2421, Edmonton, Alta. T5J 2S6.

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Leif N. Gregersen resumed smoking for about three weeks over Christmas but says he's back on the patch and still determined to kick the habit. The Athabasca University student loves writing and hopes to pursue a career as a professional writer.

### Illustration

Photo: Greg Southam, The Journal, File/ (Leif N. Gregersen) ;

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