



TOBACCO QUITCENTER
Breaking the Habit

When Susan Scott suffered a mini stroke last year, it was a wake-up call that it was finally time to quit smoking after 36 years.

Shown: Susan Scott, a smoker for 36 years, has been smoke-free for nearly a year thanks to the Tobacco Quitcenter at the Steeplechase Cancer Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset.

"My doctor told me that my smoking put me at greater risk for having a stroke," she said.

A pack-a-day smoker, Ms. Scott, 56, of Plainfield, had tried quitting smoking several times over the years – sometimes quitting cold turkey and other times trying to gradually cut back on the number of cigarettes she smoked each day.

"It was just so hard," she said.

This time around, Nimer Mian, DO, her neurologist from Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset (RWJ Somerset) referred her to the Tobacco Quitcenter at the Steeplechase Cancer Center.

She met weekly with Chris Kotsen, PsyD, a certified tobacco treatment specialist who is program manager of the hospital's Tobacco Quitcenter, for one-on-one counseling sessions. She also used the nicotine patch and a nicotine inhaler for a few months to help her control cravings.

Ms. Scott, who is blind, was used to smoking whenever she listened to books on tape or the TV. She also had a habit of reaching for a cigarette after eating and after her morning cup of coffee. Committed to breaking this habit, she began reaching for the nicotine inhaler instead.

Each week when she went to see Dr. Kotsen he did a breath carbon monoxide test.

"Carbon monoxide is in the smoke that you inhale and blocks oxygen in your body," Dr. Kotsen explained. "The carbon monoxide levels begin to drop immediately when you start cutting down on cigarettes and quit smoking. Slowly the toxins begin cleaning out of your body."

"The first time I had the test it was at 21 and it kept going down each week," Ms. Scott said. "By my fourth visit, it was down to a level of 3. At that point, I said 'I'm not smoking anymore.'"

Seeing the carbon monoxide levels go down helped her stick with her resolution even though it was tough to overcome the cravings and she became irritable at times. She was also breathing better and noticed a stronger sense of smell. Plus, she knew that it would help reduce her risk of having a stroke. "There are benefits to quitting smoking at any age," said Dr. Kotsen. "Quitting smoking can lower your risk for cancer, heart disease, stroke, peripheral vascular disease and lung diseases such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)."

In addition to individual counseling, the Tobacco Quitcenter also offers group counseling sessions and workplace groups.

Shown right: Chris Kotsen, PsyD, is a certified tobacco treatment specialist and the Program Manager for the Tobacco Quitcenter at the Steeplechase Cancer Center at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset.



That support has translated into long-term success. About 73 percent of the Quitcenter's patients who complete treatment are smoke-free six months after quitting.

Ms. Scott has not smoked since quitting last July.

"I'm proud of myself," she said. "I didn't think I could do it. It was easier for me because I had the tools. I couldn't do it on my own."

Visit www.rwjuh.edu/quitcenter or call 908-685-2442.

HELP IS ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE RWJ NEW BRUNSWICK CAMPUS THROUGH:

Rutgers Tobacco Dependence Program
Clinical Academic Building
125 Paterson Street, Suite 2300
New Brunswick, NJ

Visit tobaccoprogram.org
or call 732-235-8222.



ATTENTION SMOKERS AND FORMER SMOKERS

Find out if you are a candidate for our \$99 lung cancer screening

The screening is recommended for:

- Smokers or former smokers between the ages of 55 and 77
- Those who have 30 (or more) pack years of cigarette smoking. (A pack year = # of packs smoked per day x # of years smoked.)
- Former smokers who have quit within the last 15 years and are between the ages of 55 and 77, and are asymptomatic for signs of lung cancer.

The screening includes a low-radiation CT scan, which is highly effective at detecting lung cancer when it is most treatable as well as a follow-up visit with a pulmonologist to discuss your results.

For more information or to schedule your screening, please call: 908-927-8778