

STUB IT OUT: WHY OUR CHILDREN WILL SOON BE RUNNING OUT OF PUFF

Last week, *The Max!* met four readers bidding to give up smoking. Today, we report on how they're coping without cigarettes. But, as NATASHA WEALE reveals, smokers aren't just doing damage to their own health. Their bad habits are being passed on to the next generation – and it's our children who are going to suffer

YOU can run, but you can't hide. So don't try and kid yourself that the dangers of smoking won't catch up with you eventually.

Last week, *The Max!* showed you the grim reality of what having a puff will do to your health.

But if the tar-stained lung and the overwhelming medical evidence didn't shock you into quitting, then maybe you should forget about yourself and start thinking about your children. The next generation are the ones who will suffer.

Children of parents who smoke inhale nicotine in amounts equivalent to their actively smoking 60-150 cigarettes per year. And, considering that 49 per cent of all children in the UK live in households with at least one smoker, passive smoking is proving a real health hazard.

Last month, the Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health said the "enormous damage" smoking caused "should no longer be accepted".

Figures from the SCOTH report – the first major report of its kind in Britain for 10 years – found that living with a smoker raises the risk of developing lung cancer by a quarter and heart disease by the same amount.

For children, the effects were even worse, the study concluding that one in five cot deaths was due to the mother smoking. It also claimed that kids whose parents both smoked had an increased chance of developing asthma by 50 to 60 per cent. The report also found that smoking was the single most important AVOIDABLE cause of chronic ill-health in the UK and accounted for a third of all cancers. It went so far as to suggest that smoking should be banned in all public service buildings and on public transport, other than in designated areas, and wherever possible in the workplace.

Martin Raymond, Head of Public Affairs for the Health Education Board for Scotland, said: "Everyone has the right to clean air."

"While we acknowledge that smokers have rights, where circumstances force a choice, non-smokers' right have to come first."

"They don't harm the people they share air with, but there is mounting evidence that passive smoking does real damage."

For those youngsters who continue to suffer in silence in the home, there is the added worry that they too will pick up the habit.



BURNT OFFERINGS ... kids whose parents smoke are more likely to take up the habit – at a very young age

PICTURE: ALAN PEEBLES

KIDS ARE QUICK ON THE DRAW

Research has shown that children with two smoking parents are three times more likely to be regular smokers than kids of non-smoking parents.

And, according to a Health Education Authority survey, pupils who said neither of their parents would mind if they smoked were almost five times more likely to be regular smokers.

But it's not just the parents who are to blame – the smoking habits of older

brothers and sisters can also influence youngsters to spark up that first fag.

Research has shown that 21 per cent of pupils with older siblings who smoke are more likely to take up the habit. This compares with only four per cent of teenagers who have non-smoking older brothers and sisters.

Whatever the factors that have led to a surge in teenage smoking, the bottom line is that 12 per cent of 11-15 year olds in

Scotland are regular smokers – and under-age smokers in Britain spending an estimated £135million a year on cigarettes.

Though smoking levels have fallen among the UK population as a whole, the proportion of teenagers who light up has increased slightly in the last few years.

And, judging by the evidence, young girls are the worst offenders.

Experts believe that the sharp rise in female smoking can be attributed to "cool" image-making.

Pictures of role models such as Kate Moss and Naomi Campbell with cigarettes hanging out of their mouths give out the message that it's trendy to smoke.

Combine this with the fact that these supermodels are considered style icons in the fashion business, and it's little wonder easily-influenced teenagers turn to smoking.

AFTER all, magazines bombard young women with images of the perfect figure – what better way to achieve that than by taking up a habit that suppresses your appetite?

The tobacco industry is a vital market that relies heavily on sexy advertising because it needs to recruit new smokers to replace the estimated 330 smokers who die each day.

Some 29 per cent of adult smokers start smoking regularly at the age of 14-15. Heavy puffers tend to start earlier than light smokers; 32 per cent of heavy smokers started at 14-15 years, compared to 22 per cent of light smokers.

The younger a smoker starts, the more likely they are to suffer from a smoking-related illness and the tougher it is to stop.

A smoker who starts at the age of 15 is three times more likely to die from lung cancer than someone who starts in their mid-20s.

And a 20-fags-a-day habit really can guarantee you a very ugly death.

If you have 25 friends who smoke, take a look around you – 12 of them are going to die prematurely from lung cancer or a smoking-related illness.

Smokers are also prone to cancer of the mouth and throat. Women who smoke have up to four times more risk of getting cancer of the cervix, while male smokers are more prone to cancer of the pancreas.

If you're still in doubt as to why you should stub out the cancer sticks, think about this fact the next time you want to light up ...

There are more than 5000 amputations carried out in the UK every year due to flesh-rotting gangrene, mostly due to disease of the arteries.

And continued smoking carries the most common risk of developing diseased arteries.

You may think it's worth it now, but think about it. No individual is exempt from the horrors associated with this killer habit.

BREAKING THE HABIT

As our four quitters get into their stride, they reveal how they're coping without cigarettes and admit it's getting easier all the time ...

HUGH: ACUPUNCTURE

Hugh McLean, 40, from Bo'ness, West Lothian. 20-a-day habit.

"I haven't thought about smoking. I'm eating like a horse, but I'd rather do that than light up. We're going away this weekend and that will be the real test because I'll be going out for a drink. If I can get through that, I think I'll have cracked it. My wife and I have been surprised at how good-tempered I am. We were both prepared for me to be moody and irritable."

APRIL: LASER

April Bennie, 39, from Paisley. 35-a-day habit. "It's been a lot easier this week. I haven't missed smoking at all. Yesterday I was out for lunch with a friend who smokes and it didn't bother me in the slightest."

"I knew there was something missing – the cigarettes – but I honestly didn't want one. Since I stopped smoking, my weight has stayed exactly the same and my moods have got a lot better."

"I'm also sleeping well now, which is great."

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JOHN: HYPNOSIS

John Currie, 52, from Kilmarnock. 20-a-day habit.

"I have to admit I had a sneaky fag last week, but I didn't really enjoy it. I'm still getting the occasional pang and I'm finding it hard watching other people smoke. I don't think I'll ever be a non-smoker – rather an ex-smoker."

"I have been snacking on sweets and crisps more than usual, but I was expecting that. I'm still quite crabby – hopefully that will get better as time passes."

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JEANETTE: NICORETTE

Jeanette McDonald, 35, from Aberdeen. 60-a-day habit.

"Since getting over the flu I've been using the inhaler a lot more. I have to admit that I've been tempted on a few occasions to spark up, but so far the inhaler has managed to quash any real pangs I may have had. The cravings come and go, but that's only to be expected. I really want to quit smoking for good but I'm just taking one day at a time."

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WHAT'S IN A FAG?

TOBACCO smoke is estimated to contain more than 4000 compounds.

Cigarettes are toxic mutagenic (they change cells), carcinogenic (cancer-causing) and pharmacologically active (affecting physical and mental function).

But three major components have been identified as most likely to cause disease. They are:

TAR: Matter drawn into the smoker when he or she draws

on a lit cigarette. Once inhaled, about 70 per cent of the tar in the smoke is deposited in the smoker's lungs.

NICOTINE: A powerful and fast-acting drug, it is the addictive substance. When tobacco smoke is inhaled, nicotine is absorbed into the bloodstream, leading to increased heart rate and blood pressure, tightening of small blood vessels under the skin and changes in hormonal levels and metabolism.

CARBON MONOXIDE: An

odourless and poisonous gas formed when a cigarette is lit, it impairs the circulation of oxygen in the blood by up to 15 per cent because it combines more readily with haemoglobin – the substance that carries oxygen in the blood – than oxygen does. Cigarettes also contain many other harmful gases, metals and chemicals. They include:

ACETONE: A volatile liquid ketone widely used as a solvent.

AMMONIA: Normally found in

dry-cleaning fluids, it's used as a flavouring.

BENZENE: Obtained from coal and petroleum, it is a known carcinogen and is associated with leukaemia.

CADMIUM: A highly-poisonous metal used in batteries. It causes liver, kidney and brain damage.

FORMALDEHYDE: A highly-poisonous, colourless liquid with a pungent odour used to preserve dead bodies. It also causes cancer, as well as respiratory and skin problems.