

Trevor Matthews puffed his way through about a million cigarettes over 52 years. It left him so ill that he thought he had only months to live.

The 59-year-old, from Langton Close, Lincoln, said it was finally an article in the Lincolnshire Echo about laser therapy treatment that proved to be his lifeline.

Today he is celebrating one year of being smoke-free and here he tells Wendy Inkster how kicking the habit saved his life ...

My laser life-saver

IT'S MAGIC: Trevor Matthews said of the laser therapy treatment he received: "It was just like she waved a magic wand and cured me of my terrible addiction." Picture reference: 0-2868-23a.

I STARTED smoking at the age of six – a habit which in my late teens turned into a 60-a-day addiction.

But it wasn't until about 10 years ago that I first noticed just how much it was damaging my health.

I dived into the water while on holiday in Ibiza and within seconds I was gasping for breath.

Two men spotted me and immediately jumped in and saved me from drowning.

I went to the doctor when I got home and he diagnosed lung disease. I also had blood tests which showed there was not sufficient oxygen in my bloodstream.

The doctor gave me an oxygen concentrator to use at home and in the car to help me breathe and before long I got to the stage where I was using it 24 hours a day.

In October 1996 I was so bad I couldn't get from one room to the next. I phoned for an ambulance to take me to the hospital, no longer being able to cope at home.

The doctor gave me a steroid inhaler which made a big difference, and also put me down for surgery. In August 1997 they took about 20 per cent of each of my lungs away.

This created more room for my lungs to expand in the cavity of my chest.

I had to stop smoking for the surgery or else the doctors wouldn't go ahead with it, but I was so ill I couldn't smoke anyway.

In fact, I didn't smoke for about 15 months, until I had a spell of bronchitis and couldn't go out. It

was then that I found an old pack of cigarettes sitting in a drawer.

Out of curiosity more than anything, I had one – but that one cigarette turned into 10 a day, then 20 a day, and gradually, after about six months, 60 a day. I was back to where I was before.

At first, smoking again didn't affect me too much because the operation had improved my breathing quite a bit.

But by June last year I couldn't walk more than 10 paces without having to stop for five minutes to get my breath back.

At this point I knew my health was deteriorating and there was no way the doctors would do the operation again.

I knew I was on the way out unless I gave up smoking.

After months of struggling with patches, chewing gum and even hypnotherapy, all to no avail, I had given up and started putting my affairs in order.

But then I saw the article in the Echo about Anne Penman laser therapy which helps people to stop smoking. It gave me hope – I had tried everything else so it was either that or nothing.

I got in touch with Alyson Spurr, a laser therapist, based in Harmston, and on my first visit to her I brought two cigarettes – one for the journey there and one for the way home.

I had one treatment and on the way home I threw the second cigarette out – it was just like she waved a magic wand and cured me of my terrible addiction.

This was one year ago today, and I have never touched a cigarette

since. I still fancy one – but I don't need one. The addiction is gone completely.

It has made a huge difference in my life. I can walk about now. I even went to the theatre recently, which I have not done for years.

I still use the oxygen because there isn't a cure for diseased lungs, but my health and breathing have certainly improved.

And I can't believe how easy it was to quit with the treatment.

It has without a doubt saved my life. I would not be alive today without it.

I cannot thank the Lincolnshire Echo and Alyson enough – I will drink a small toast to them today.



The beam of hope

LASER therapist Alyson Spurr believes Mr Matthews would not be here today if he had not quit smoking.

She has been treating him for the last year and could not stress enough the difference the decision has made in his life.

"You could visibly see what the cigarettes were doing to him. Now he looks better and is definitely more healthy," said Mrs Spurr, a former nurse who quit smoking two years ago.

"His quality of life has improved dramatically."

When she first met Mr Matthews it was very difficult for him to catch his breath after walking from the car park to the laser therapy centre in Church Lane, Harmston, near Lincoln.

Although he continues to use oxygen to aid his breathing, he is certainly more active and healthy.

The Anne Penman Laser Therapy

Programme consists of three main elements – counselling, laser treatment and back-up support, including a telephone helpline.

The laser therapy works by balancing endorphin levels – the natural body chemicals that have a calming, relaxing effect.

Nicotine from the tobacco smoke increases the level of endorphins.

When someone stops smoking the sudden drop in the levels leads to withdrawal symptoms and physical cravings.

To help deal with these unpleasant cravings, the therapists use a soft laser beam to assist the body in balancing endorphin levels in the central nervous system.

The initial cost of the treatment is £80 and, after six months, £12 for each treatment.

For more information about Anne Penman therapy, telephone Alyson Spurr on (01522) 722440.

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