



A FIRST BREATH SUCCESS STORY



By Michelle Baier

WOOD COUNTY - Heather started smoking when she was 14 years old and within a few years of smoking her first cigarette, she had progressed to smoking one and a half packs per day. She attempted to quit seven or eight times using nicotine replacement therapies such as Welbutrin, nicotine patch and gum, and even tried to quit “cold-turkey,” but the urge to smoke remained.

During Heather’s first pregnancy she immediately cut down the amount of cigarettes she smoked to one a day, or one every other day. However, after giving birth, Heather’s smoking increased to half a pack or even a full pack per day. Heather and her husband never smoked inside the house, but stress, along with a spouse who smoked, made it very hard to quit.

When she learned she was pregnant for the second time, she again immediately cut down the amount she smoked. However, this pregnancy was different...she was carrying twins!

Shortly after learning of her second pregnancy, Heather received a visit from Diane Rodd, RN, PNCC for Wood County Health Department. Diane provided her with the important information she and her husband needed about twins. Diane informed them that most twins are born smaller and earlier than a single baby is. She also informed Heather and her husband that her babies were at a greater risk to be born premature because of the effects from their smoking. Diane then introduced Heather to the *First Breath* program, explaining the support she would receive for trying to quit as well as the incentives.

Smaller! Earlier! After hearing these words, Heather knew cutting down was not enough to protect her babies. She had to quit. She then joined *First Breath* and did very well working with Diane and using information presented in the brochure and workbook as a reminder of the effects nicotine has on a developing child.

While the number one motivating factor for Heather to quit was the health of her babies she said the incentives, especially the diaper coupon she would receive if she quit, gave her an extra nudge for giving up the one cigarette she smoked each day. With support from Diane and her mother, Heather would fight cigarette cravings by drinking a glass of water, taking a walk, or sucking on a piece of candy.

That part of the quit process was easy but she never imagined just how difficult it would be to give up that last cigarette. She says, “Stress and being around others who smoked, especially my husband, made it hard to fight cravings.” She would occasionally give into her craving if she saw her husband smoking because it did not seem fair that she could not smoke too.

Five months into her second pregnancy, Heather's husband approached her about the two of them seeing a hypnotist to quit smoking. He had heard an advertisement on the radio and decided they should try it. The hypnotist helped both Heather and her husband fight cravings, and both were able to quit right away! However, several months later, Heather's husband started smoking an occasional cigarette. Heather knew if he did not quit completely, she would start up again. Her husband then traded cigarettes for chewing tobacco and was eventually able to give both up for good!

Heather and her husband have been smoke-free since February 2005. Her pregnancy went full-term with a planned C-section at 38 weeks. In April of this year, they welcomed healthy twin boys, weighing 8lbs 4oz and 7lbs 2oz, into their family.

While she no longer associates herself with smoking, Heather says the urge is sometimes still there. She offers this to others about smoking: "Don't start! Quitting smoking is like trying to quit eating. You get a hunger pain from the addiction."