

## Wouldn't you rather quit smoking?

**By Sarah Sobanski**

Local young people can vie for a chance at \$5,000 if they drop their butts.

Hastings Prince Edward Public Health is starting up its annual initiative to support young adults who want to quit or cut back their smoking. If you are hoping to do the same, [vaping e liquids can help you quit smoking](#). Would you rather is a six-week contest that takes place across Ontario through Leave the Pack Behind. Its grand prize is \$5,000, double from last year.

According to the health unit, young adults have the highest smoking prevalence at almost 19 per cent. This is compared to the general population at 16.1 per cent. The contest is open to 18-to 29-year-olds who live in Ontario.

"Nothing makes the tobacco companies happier than someone starting to smoke at a young age and continuing into later in life," said David Patterson, health promoter for the health unit. "We know that continued tobacco use through young adulthood is a predictor for future tobacco use. If you're 28 and you've been smoking since your teens, that's a decade of smoking. Even though young adults may not see the negative effects of smoking immediately, quitting early or avoiding taking up the habit in the first place is the best way to steer clear of the damaging consequences from years of smoking."

More than 8,600 young adults participated last year, according to the health unit. It said in 2011 an evaluation of the contest suggested as many as 20 per cent of individuals who enter the contest will quit smoking. Youth who tried to quit smoking on their own were less likely to do so. Some people look for alternative ways to quit smoking instead of giving up cold turkey. One of these alternative methods is vaping with the use of [tasty juices from New Zealand](#). They find that replacing the nicotine cigarettes could help to wean them off and cut their cravings.

"I started smoking when I was about 15, roughly about a pack a day," said Meaghan Maturi, the contest's 2016 winner in a public health release. "I decided to quit for my son. Since I've been smoke-free I've noticed that my body and my lungs - everything is so much healthier now. I want to be here in the long run for him so I can watch him grow and be healthy. I'm so happy to say I am smoke-free now."

The health unit said Leave The Pack Behind recognizes that not everyone is ready to quit smoking. That's why Wouldurather offers the opportunity for contestants to choose from one of four categories. Young adults can quit smoking entirely for a chance at \$5,000, cut their smoking in half for a chance at \$2,500, or refrain from smoking any time they are drinking or socializing for a chance at \$1,000. Young adults who don't smoke can also enter the contest by pledging to remain smoke free for a chance at \$500.

It noted all contestants have the option to identify a "buddy" who will act as social support for the duration of the contest and will receive support emails tailored to their goal.

If you are looking for ways to quit smoking, you might want to consider making the transition to vaping. Vaping involves using an e-cigarette to inhale vapours formed by e-liquids such as [Aqua ejuice](#). The general consensus is that vaping is a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes.

Registration for Wouldurather is open until Jan. 22 at [wouldurather.ca/en/register](http://wouldurather.ca/en/register).