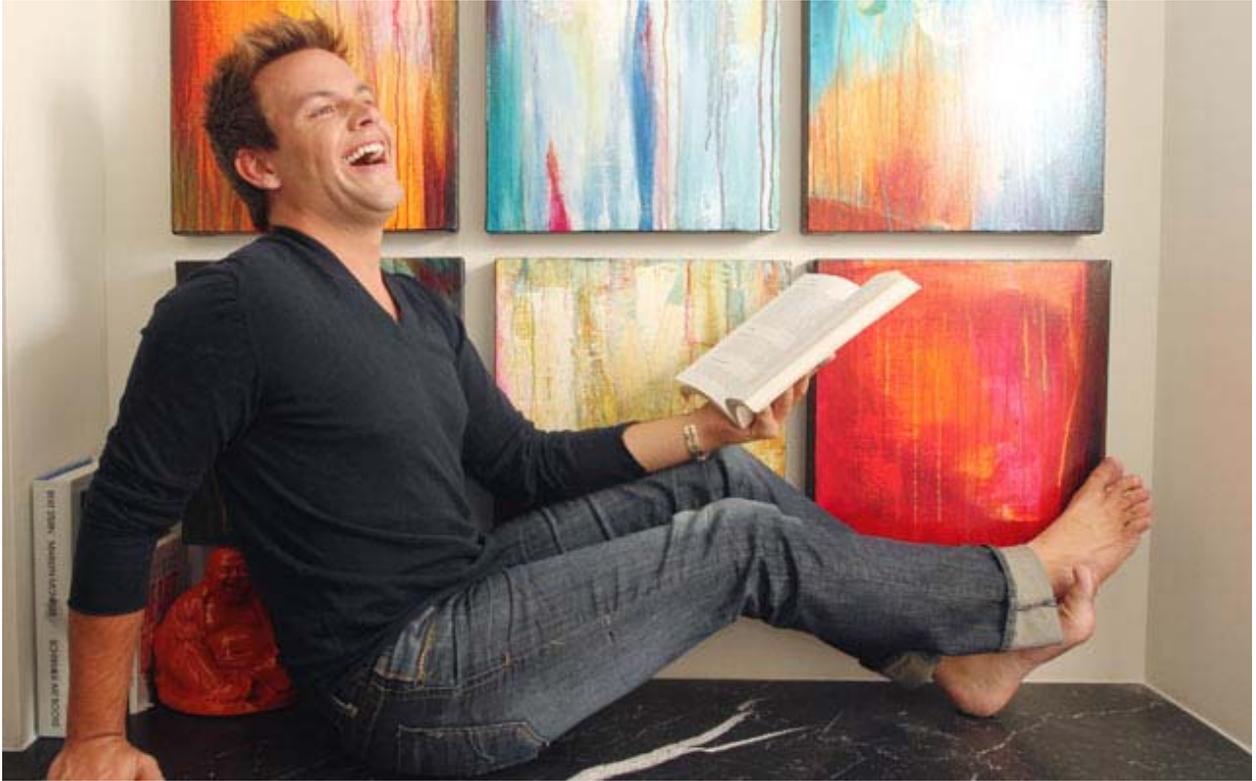


Up In Smoke

CALGARY HERALD OCTOBER 5, 2012



Four months ago, Daniel Côté finally smoking quit for the last time, embracing a healthier lifestyle and a series of cosmetic treatments — from teeth whitening and Restylane to Botox and medical-grade skin creams — to help him turn back the clock.

Photograph by: Christina Ryan, For the Calgary Herald

By **Barbara Balfour**

For the Calgary Herald

The damage Daniel Côté's casual habit-turned-addiction was causing year after year wasn't immediately apparent.

Instead, it crept up gradually, yellowing his teeth, creasing his skin and casting a sallowness over his face that stood out in photographs.

What started as a few cigarettes with drinks or coffee soon escalated into a pack-a-day habit that left him wheezing after a flight of stairs, and completely exhausted at the end of the workday.

Four months ago, Côté finally quit for the last time,

embracing a healthier lifestyle and a series of cosmetic treatments — from teeth whitening and Restylane to Botox and medical-grade skin creams — to help him turn back the clock.

“My friends and family are thrilled that I finally quit. Going from running marathons to smoking didn’t make sense for a lot of people who knew me,” says the interior designer and business owner.

“There’s such a huge difference in my appearance, and I’ve now got the energy to pull off larger projects at work.

“A big part of my business is the esthetic package that I sell, so the way I present myself is imperative. Most of what I do is from a cosmetic standpoint, so if I don’t look well, that soils the whole thing across the board.”

It doesn’t take a long time to see the damaging effects of smoking, says Dr. Tom Woo of the Laser Rejuvenation Clinics and Spa.

“Studies have found that even smokers as young as 20 have facial wrinkling that doctors can see under a microscope,” says Woo.

“And if you smoke 10 or more cigarettes a day for at least 10 years, you’re more likely to develop deeply wrinkled, leathery skin and a yellowish complexion.”

Smoking can also create crow’s feet, vertical wrinkles at 90 degrees from the upper and lower lips from constant puckering, grayish or yellowish skin, and more prominent facial bones, creating a too-skinny look.

Cigarette smoking causes even more premature wrinkling than sun exposure, says facial plastic surgery specialist Dr. Kristina Zakhary.

“By the age of 70, smoking 30 cigarettes a day will have contributed to an extra 14 years of aging,” says Zakhary, who is a fellow of both the Canadian and the American academies of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, and accredited by the American Board of Facial Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery.

Zakhary says this is because the components of a cigarette can change the elasticity of the skin fibers and increase loss of collagen, while nicotine narrows the blood vessels. This reduces moisture and blood supply to the skin, and leads to a reduction in vitamin A, which is responsible for skin cell turnover and making new cells.

Smoking also contributes to slow healing of wounds, she adds.

“It is not generally recommended to operate on smokers because they heal more slowly and are at a higher risk of more frequent infections,” says Zakhary.

“Typically, I suggest quitting for a minimum of one year before surgery.”

Some of the surgeries Zakhary has recommended to former smokers include face and forehead lifts to tighten loose and saggy tissues, and upper and lower eyelid tucks (blepharoplasty) to reduce the look of bags under the eyes or tired-looking hooded eyelids.

As smoking can accelerate the loss of the fat pads, muscle and bone in the cheeks that is normally part of the aging process, these procedures can help counteract some of the effects.

Other less-invasive procedures that Zakhary recommends to former smokers include skin hydration with medical-grade creams, exfoliation through chemical peels, and

wrinkle reduction through the usage of Botox and fillers such as Restylane and Juvederm.

Usually, only one treatment of a filler is needed to obtain desired results around the lips, eyes or nasolabial folds, says Woo. The effects last between nine to 12 months.

Depending on the amount used, Botox treatments can cost between \$300 and \$400 for the face, and \$600 for Juvederm.

“I give people the analogy that you just need to give up one Starbucks coffee per day and your lines will be gone. Most people think that’s a pretty good deal,” says Woo, who estimates about 60 per cent of his clients in the 40-to-50 age range are former smokers.

Laser treatments are particularly effective for repairing damage to localized areas, says Woo, who likens the effect of resurfacing the skin to taking a hair dryer to Saran wrap.

“It tightens right up,” he says. “The laser removes the top layer of skin and stimulates the formation of collagen. You see results after one treatment, but you would need at least a week of downtime.”

Another popular treatment with no downtime is the Fraxel laser, which achieves results with three to five visits spaced a month apart and only topical anesthetic.

To treat wrinkling around the neck and arms, Woo recommends Thermage, which relies on radio frequency waves that contracts collagen in the skin by 20 per cent, leading to significant tightening with no side-effects and only minor discomfort.

While these cosmetic procedures work wonders for treating the damaging effects of smoking on the outside, it’s important to see what’s going on underneath the skin too, says cosmetic dentist Dr. Angela Mulrooney.

More specifically, Mulrooney is interested in the bone loss that often occurs with smoking.

“Baby boomers tend to be the ones with the most damage of the bone and who are starting to quit smoking,” she says.

“If they have just freshly quit, they may come in saying, ‘My treat to myself is to whiten my teeth.’ But we have to do an exam first to make sure we know everything that is going on, not just treat what we see above the gum line.

“Some smokers may have quit 10 years ago but the damage has been done. Their gums look normal on the outside but when you look at the X-ray they may have lost 50 per cent of the bone.”

In some cases, patients may need periodontal surgery to reduce the height of the gum relative to the bone.

“If your gum is where it should be and the bone has receded seven millimetres, your toothbrush can’t get down there into that pocket,” says Mulrooney. “Another option is to use antibiotics to get the gums to pull down naturally and keep on a regular cleaning schedule.”

Mulrooney recommends laser whitening about once every five years. This method provides complete coverage around the nooks and crannies in the teeth and is particularly good for patients with tooth sensitivity.

Côté says he has never looked back since he quit smoking.

“If you don’t quit the first time, keep trying because the benefits are worth it,” he says. “The difference in my energy levels and what I can get done is huge. Now, I go to the gym after a full day at work and run for two hours.

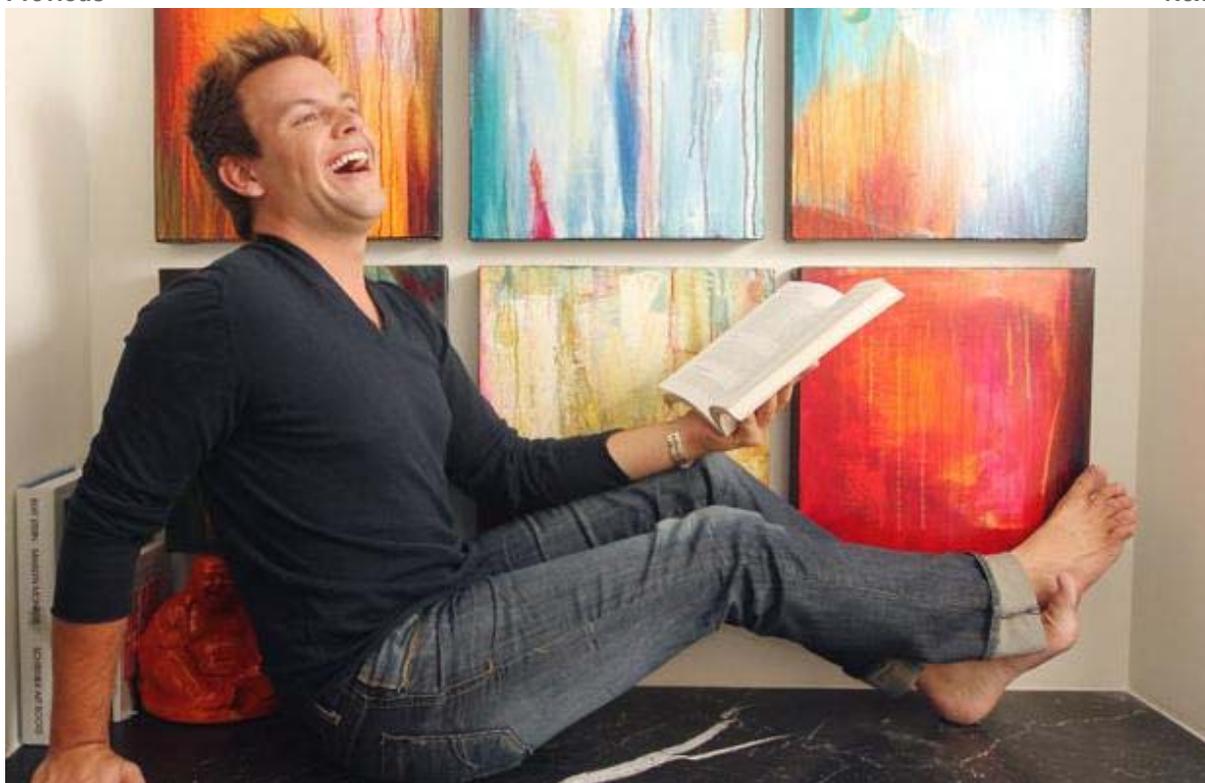
“Smoking just adds to the toxins in your body and drags yourself down. When you finally do it, the difference it makes in your life and on your face is unbelievable.

“It’s the best choice people can make, really.”

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