

Waiting for class to begin, Brett Mendlik, age 14, smokes beside the "catwalk" at Lincoln East High School. Mendlik began smoking at age 7.

Tanna Kinnaman/DN



By Angie Schendt
Staff Reporter

Kristen Tennant, a sophomore French major, has a pretty healthy lifestyle. She eats right, exercises regularly, and wants to lead a long life and look young as long as possible.

There's just one problem.

She smokes.

"I think it is important to be healthy and active, and smoking is standing in the way," Tennant said.

Her habit started as two years ago during a trip to France. "I would take a drag from a friend's cigarette, then I would bum one, and then I bought my first pack," she said.

Now she can't stop.

In the past year, Tennant has tried quitting cold turkey, cutting back, and using videos and cassettes. The longest she's gone without a cigarette is two weeks.

"It's been hell," she said.

Tennant is one of many younger Americans continuing to light up, even as older Americans concerned about their health are kicking the habit.

"For youth in general, smoking is on the rise again," said Mary Applebee, program director for the American Lung Association office in Omaha.

However, one study shows that for college-aged Nebraskans, smoking may be going down. According to the 1991-92 Nebraska Behavioral Risk Factor Survey, about 18 percent of Nebraska residents ages 18-24 smoke, down from 26 percent in 1987-88.

Applebee said when smoking ads were banned from television about 30

years ago, smoking dropped dramatically. Forty percent of all adults smoked 30 years ago, and now under 25 percent smoke.

"But 30 years ago, the ads were not targeted towards children," she said.

Ads today target children through cartoon characters such as Joe Camel and product merchandise, she said. Tobacco companies spend about \$6 billion each year on advertising.

Kathy Burklund, health educator for the Lincoln/Lancaster health department, also blamed advertising for the number of smokers.

"The massive advertising campaigns of tailored ads that make smoking look exciting and glamorous make people want to start," she said.

Applebee said the party atmosphere in college prompted some students to smoke.

"Smoking and drinking sometimes go together," she said.

For example, among high school seniors in America who are heavy drinkers, 65 percent are smokers. Only 17.2 percent of non-smokers are heavy drinkers, according to the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The stress of college also makes some students want to smoke, Applebee said, as does the lack of authority figures like parents. Young people also are more willing to take risks and experiment.

However, most smokers start under the age of 18, Applebee said.

President Clinton has presented a new plan that would make the Food and Drug Administration regulate tobacco because it contains nicotine, an addictive substance. The plan would limit

advertising and access to cigarettes.

Vending machines that sell cigarettes would be banned, and cigarettes would be placed behind counters so identification would have to be checked.

"We are delighted with it," Applebee said.

She said she did not know what effect this would have on the United States, or whether it would have as big an effect as the ban 30 years ago on television advertising.

However, she said, smoking rates among minors should go down because they won't have access to cigarettes. For example, she said, when the Omaha police department does compliance checks to make sure that tobacco products are not sold to minors, smoking goes down.

"We think that old people begin to see their own mortality, and the onset of diseases caused by smoking starts to show," Applebee said. "Young people don't think about the consequences."

Limits on areas where smoking is acceptable, like the workplace, restaurants and airplanes, have prompted some people to quit, she said.

Burklund said smokers who quit were prompted by the financial burden, the self-satisfaction of quitting, or encouragement from their children.

However, the biggest reason people quit smoking is their health. In 1993, smoking accounted for about 419,000 deaths in the United States.

More than half of smokers who die in their middle age will have been killed by tobacco. Most of those killed started in their teenage years and were not heavy smokers.

Coffee drinkers should try to keep use down

By Sarah Scalet
Senior Editor

The most widely-used drug in the world can be purchased all over Lincoln. It's dirt cheap, it comes in different forms, and anyone can buy it any time.

Over the years, its opponents have tried to link it to high blood pressure, cancer, heart disease and birth defects.

But if you're one of the many Americans who use caffeine every day, you don't necessarily

need to worry about any major health problems.

"The research is really contradictory," said Karen Miller, the registered dietitian/nutrition educator at Campus Recreation and the University Health Center. "You need to be aware of those (studies), but I guess there's no hard-and-fast evidence."

Still, she said, when it comes to caffeine, moderation is the key.

"The recommendation is ... two cups or less of coffee a day," Miller said, or around 230 milligrams of caffeine.

However, she pointed out that the amount of caffeine in a cup of coffee varies.

Drip coffee-makers usually make the strongest coffee, followed by percolators, then instant coffee, Miller said. Decaffeinated coffee also has a small amount of caffeine — about one to five milligrams per five-ounce cup.

Tea, soda and chocolate are other common sources of caffeine, and many over-the-counter drugs, as well as some prescription drugs, contain caffeine.

Miller said most of the health problems asso-

ciated with caffeine were its side effects.

Brad Buckner, a junior art major at UNL and a coffee drinker since 1982, had to cut back to two or three cups of coffee a day.

"I started really experiencing some side effects and decided to cut down," he said. Too much coffee had been making him irritable and sometimes tired.

Kyle Bigham, a senior English major who used to work at the Coffee House, also knows

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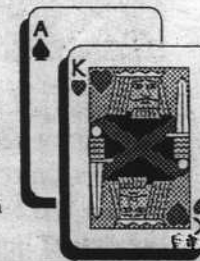
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