This is so not how this was supposed to be. I quit smoking and my lungs were supposed to clear and I was adding years to my life and getting sick less.

Reality? Coughing, coughing, coughing. I thought perhaps it was my lungs purging more than 30 years of cigarette smoke but I don't think so.

Throat hurts. Chest hurts. Head hurts. Probably got a fever. Yuck!

Flu bug, why did you have to visit me?

It was inevitable. You can't hide from it. It gets us all - eventually.

But I was supposed to get a free pass this year because I quit smoking. It's not fair.

So now I have to get this written, share my misery with you and go to bed. Is it cold enough out there for ya? I love walking the dog and having my nostrils freeze together. I'm just lucky this one is almost as cold as I am because he doesn't have much fur. Sadie could stick it out for a while with her triple coat.

I'm ready for the heat wave today and I won't even mind a little snow. I'm hoping to sleep in a bit and wake up to a white wonderland. It will look lovely while I snivel and cough.

I wonder if Buckeye Chuck and Punxsutawney Phil will agree today. I think it would be cool to have my own ground hog and hold a party each Groundhog Day and let everyone come over

and see if my little guys sees his shadow – or not. So which will it be? Six more weeks of winter or an early spring? I'll tell you a secret. Groundhog Day is about six weeks from the first day of spring. Coincidence? I don't know, you tell me.

It would still be neat to have my own groundhog.

I've have been sleeping better since I quit smoking and that's no laughing matter. I appreciate sleep and there's nothing better than good sleep.

Things are starting to taste better, too. I didn't think things tasted bad before so this could get interesting – and dangerous. There's this thing about quitting smoking: it's really hard and you find yourself trying to replace it with something and it's usually food. I think Popsicles may be my saving grace.

There is one thing I hope I don't do after officially becoming an ex-smoker. That would be to get down on people who still smoke. If anyone knows how hard it is, I do. It was a big decision to put it out there in a column and let everyone know.

When smokers talk about it, it's kind of like a club. We all know how it is. We all know how much they control us and when one of us tries to quit and doesn't make it, well, we all know that it's hard and it may take more than one try. When we see someone smoking who said they were going to try and quit, we feel their pain. There's no judging. We're bummed because we thought maybe if they could do it, we could too.

So remember that. Not necessarily for me but for all those trying to shake the nicotine monkey off their back.