Tobacco Use

What should you know about tobacco use?

- Tobacco use includes smoking cigarettes, cigars, or pipes.
- Tobacco use also includes chewing tobacco, using snuff ("smokeless tobacco") and water pipe smoking (hookahs and shisha).
- Unusual or uncommon tobacco products include bidis (small, unfiltered, flavored cigarettes) and kreteks (clove cigarettes).
- Tobacco contains more than 50 harmful chemicals.

What should you know about nicotine?

- Nicotine is the strongest active chemical in all forms of tobacco.
- Nicotine is a highly addictive substance, as addictive as heroin.
- People who smoke regularly are mentally or physically addicted to nicotine.
- People who use tobacco regularly often have withdrawal symptoms (headaches, cough, and fatigue) when they stop.

Who smokes?

- Most girls do not smoke or use tobacco in any form.
- Teens give many different reasons for smoking.
  - — To feel mature and act like an adult
  - — To express independence
  - — To appear sexually desirable
  - — To fit in with a group socially
  - — To try to control body weight
  - — To "calm down" or deal with stress

What are the short-term health risks of tobacco use?

- All forms of tobacco can be harmful to your health.
- Secondhand smoke (inhaled from other people) is almost as harmful as smoking.
- Tobacco users have
  - — Less strength and do not perform as well in sports.
  - — Increased resting heart rates and shortness of breath.
  - — Increased coughing, phlegm, and wheezing.
  - — Bad breath.
  - — Stained teeth.
  - — Bad smell in clothes, hair, and skin.

What are some other health risks of continued tobacco use?

- Weak bones (osteoporosis)
- Heavier or more painful menstrual periods
- Bronchitis, emphysema, and problems from asthma
- Stomach ulcers
- Gum disease, more cavities, and early tooth loss
- Heart attack, coronary heart disease, hardening of the arteries, and stroke
- High blood pressure
- Cancer of the lungs, mouth, and throat
- Cancer of the cervix and ovaries
- Cancer of the kidneys, bladder, intestine, pancreas, and liver

What are some other downsides of tobacco use?

- Unattractive personal appearance (bad breath, stained teeth, dull hair, and wrinkles)
- Social disapproval (Most people do not use tobacco.)
- Cost of tobacco products
- Missing school or work because of illness
- Increased medical expenses from health problems
- Breaking the law (Purchase of cigarettes by an individual younger than age 18 years is illegal in most states.)

What are the risks of smoking while pregnant?

- The baby may be born with birth defects.
- The baby may be born early.
- The baby may be born with low birth weight.
- Children of smokers are more likely to have colds, ear infections, asthma and die of sudden infant death syndrome.

Do teens quit smoking cigarettes?

- Most teens who smoke regret having started.
- Most teens who smoke try to quit.
- Most teens who smoke could use some help to quit.

What should you do to quit smoking?

- Get support from family and friends.
- Get advice and support from health care practitioners.
- Participate in a program to stop smoking.
- Set a quit date within 2 weeks.
- Get rid of all cigarettes and ashtrays.
- Avoid places where others smoke.
- Use cigarette substitutes (straws, gum, and pretzels) to keep hands and mouth busy.
- Contact one of the organizations listed in this fact sheet to obtain self-help materials.
- Do not lose hope—most people take several tries to quit completely.
- Use the five **Ds** to help with nicotine withdrawal.

  Delay—the craving will go away.
  Deep breathe—this will calm you.
  Drink water—this helps flush out the chemicals.
  Do something else—find a good habit.
  Discuss—talk about your feelings with someone.

What about nicotine replacement products?

- These products (gum, patches, and inhalers) contain nicotine. You must get a prescription to use these products if you are younger than 18 years.
- Nicotine in any form is harmful to your health.
- These are not recommended if you smoke less than half a pack a day.
- There are other medications that may be prescribed for heavy smokers.
- These can be effective but must be used safely.
- Talk to a health professional about the best choice for you.

For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

American Academy of Family Physicians
Telephone: (913) 906-6000 or (800) 274-2237
Web: www.aafp.org
Tar Wars: www.tarwars.org

American Cancer Society
Telephone: (800) ACS-2343 (227-2345)
Web: www.cancer.org

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
Telephone: (202) 638-5577 or (800) 673-8444
Web: www.acog.org

American Heart Association
Telephone: (800) AHA-USA-1 (242-8721)
Web: www.americanheart.org

American Legacy Foundation
Telephone: 202-454-5555
Web: www.americanlegacy.org/

American Lung Association
Telephone: (800) LUNGUSA (586-4872)
National Headquarters: (212) 315-8700
Lung HelpLine: (800) 548-8252
Web: www.lungusa.org

American Medical Association
Telephone: (800) 621-8335
Web: www.ama-assn.org

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Telephone: (202) 296-5469
Web: www.tobaccofreekids.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Smoking and Tobacco Use
Telephone: (404) 639-3534 or (800) 311-3435
Web: www.cdc.gov/tobacco/index.htm

National Cancer Institute
Telephone: (800) 4-CANCER (422-6237)
Web: www.cancer.gov

Prepared by the ACOG Committee on Adolescent Health Care. For more information, e-mail smoking@acog.org.
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