



TOBACCO USE: A FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

What should you know about tobacco use?

- Tobacco use includes smoking cigarettes, cigars, or pipes.
- Tobacco use also includes chewing tobacco and using snuff (“smokeless tobacco”) and water pipe smoking (hookahs, 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.
- Adolescents become addicted to nicotine more quickly and at lower doses than adults.
- People who use tobacco regularly often have withdrawal symptoms when they stop.

How common is tobacco use among adolescent girls?

- 59% of 12th graders and 39% of ninth graders say they have ever smoked.
- 26% of 12th graders and 12% of ninth graders have smoked in the past month.
- 16% of 12th graders and 6% of ninth graders smoke daily.
- 12% of girls say they smoked a cigarette before age 13 years.
- 2% of girls say they have ever used smokeless tobacco in the past month.

Which girls are most likely to smoke or use tobacco?

- Young people 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
- In general, girls who smoke regularly are more likely to
 - Have parents, siblings, or friends who smoke.
 - Be influenced by friends rather than family.
 - Be limited in their educational goals.
 - Be risk takers and rebellious.
 - Use alcohol or other drugs.

What are the short-term risks of tobacco use?

- All forms of tobacco are harmful.
- Secondhand smoke (inhaled from other people, including parents) is almost as harmful as smoking.
- Tobacco users have
 - Less physical endurance and worse performance in sports.
 - Increased resting heart rates and shortness of breath.
 - Increased coughing, mucus production, and wheezing, especially when they have “colds” or if they have asthma or allergies.
 - Bad breath and stained teeth.
 - Smokey smell on clothing, in hair, or on skin.

What are the health risks of tobacco use continuing into adulthood?

- Osteoporosis (thinning, weak bones)
- 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 problems associated with 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 (The purchase of cigarettes by an individual younger than age 18 years or the purchase of cigarettes for an individual younger than age 18 years is illegal in most states.)

Do teens quit smoking cigarettes?

- 62% of teen girls who have smoked have tried to quit.
- Most teens who smoke regret having started.
- Most smokers quit several times before they are successful.
- Most teen smokers need help in order to quit smoking.

What should you do to help your teen quit smoking?

- Get support from family and friends.
- Get advice and support from health care practitioners.
- Encourage her to participate in a smoking cessation program.
- Contact one of the organizations listed in this fact sheet to obtain self-help materials.
- Share the following suggestions with her:
 - Set a quit date within 2 weeks.
 - Get rid of all cigarettes and ashtrays.
 - Avoid places where others smoke.
 - Use cigarette substitutes (eg, straws, gum, and pretzels).
- Tell her not to lose hope—most people take several tries to quit completely.
- Help her use the five **Ds** to help with nicotine withdrawal:
 - Delay**—the craving will go away.
 - Deep breathe**—this will calm her.
 - Drink water**—this helps flush out the chemicals.
 - Do something else**—find a good habit.
 - Discuss**—encourage her to talk about her feelings with someone.

What about nicotine replacement products for my teen?

- These products (gum, patches, and inhalers) contain nicotine. Your teen must get a prescription for these products if she is younger than 18 years.
- Nicotine in any form is harmful to health.
- These are not recommended if she smokes less than half a pack per 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 her.

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