



TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT...



Smoking

They Can Break the Habit Before It Starts

Make no mistake about it. Cigarettes are a deadly and highly addictive drug. The fact that they're also a legal drug makes them all the more dangerous. Technically, it's illegal in many areas for anyone under 18 to buy cigarettes. But teenagers can be lured by the attractive advertising and easy availability of cigarettes. Even if your children are never exposed to illicit drugs, there's little chance that they can avoid seeing and hearing about cigarettes.

Many Smokers Start Young

Habitual smokers often report having started as teenagers, or even younger. You can save your teens the painful—and sometimes unsuccessful—process of quitting cigarettes by convincing them not to start. If your teen is already smoking, discuss the social and health risks. It may encourage him or her to quit.

Social Pressures

Smoking is advertised as being “glamorous” or “sophisticated.” The truth is not as attractive as the ads. Smoking makes your clothes,

hair, and breath smell bad and can permanently stain your teeth and fingers yellow. It's an expensive habit, costing hundreds of dollars a year. Nowadays many people shun smokers and consider cigarettes a nuisance. And, contrary to popular belief, smoking doesn't help you stay slim.

Health Risks

Cigarettes contain several hazardous substances, including tar and nicotine. The effects of tar are immediate. Tar in the lungs causes coughing, wheezing and a sore throat. The first effects of nicotine are headache, nausea and dizziness. But, in the long run, nicotine can also lead to lung and throat cancer as well as emphysema and bronchitis, which are both lung disorders. Chewing tobacco is just as dangerous. It can cause cancer of the mouth.

Teaching by Example

If you, the parent, are a smoker now, a good way to encourage your children not to pick up the habit is for you to quit. Not only will your youngsters avoid the perils of smoking, but you'll improve your own health as well.

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