



Teens - Tobacco Talk

A lot of false messages have developed about smoking. Knowing the myths and understanding the facts will help you talk with your teen about "lighting up."

Myth - Smoking is cool

Fact - Tobacco can cause bad breath, stained teeth, wheezing, coughing, phlegm, and always makes your hair and clothes smell bad. Therefore, smoking is not the road to popularity. The idea that "everybody's doing it" just doesn't apply to tobacco use. A nationwide survey in 1999 showed 82 out of 100 eighth-graders had not smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days. About 65% of high school seniors had not smoked in the same time period.

Myth - Smoking will help with weight loss

Fact - Overall, smokers weigh less than non-smokers. However, smoking is not likely to cause visible changes in weight. Exercise is a healthier and longer lasting approach to weight loss.

Myth - Tobacco can't hurt young and healthy people.

Fact - Teenagers probably know that using tobacco can cause long-term illness like emphysema or cancer. They also need to know it reduces the lung's ability to function, making breathing really tough during exercise and athletics. Cigarettes also contain arsenic, ammonia, and formaldehyde - not very healthy!

Myth - Smoking and chewing are cheap habits

Fact - At an average of \$3.00 per pack, a person who smokes a pack a day spends over \$1000 per year on cigarettes. That would buy about 75 new CDs.

Myth - Quitting is easy

Fact - Twenty million people in the United States try to quit smoking each year. Only three percent are successful in the long term, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Furthermore, young smokers do develop tolerance and dependence the same as adult smokers.

Share a few of the above facts with the young people you care about. Also, listen to their comments to help them make wise decisions. If you belong to a culture like American Indian, where tobacco is sacred and reserved for special occasions, mention its honored role and the need to respect not abuse it. Remember too, the examples parents set by choosing smoke-free environments send an important message. It also protects your family from the very hazardous dangers of second-hand smoke.

Source: *Stop Before You Start*, University of Minnesota School of Public Health

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