

What If I Use Tobacco?

Just know that your children are more likely to smoke if they see you smoking. The best advice would be to quit using tobacco, not only for your children's sake but yours as well. Even if they know you smoke but never see you doing it, they may be less inclined to try it. Don't try to sneak around your children; rather, use it as a teaching tool to expose them to the truth. In a way, you may have even more of an influence than parents who never smoked because you have lived through the addiction firsthand. Be honest with them about:

- How you got started
- What you thought about tobacco the first time trying it
- How difficult quitting can be
- How your health has been affected
- How much it has cost you, both financially and socially

What if My Teen Already Uses Tobacco?

If they're already smoking or chewing tobacco, try to help them quit:

- Find out your child's reasoning for smoking. Are they trying to get attention? Are they trying to fit in with a certain group of kids at school?
- Educate them on the problems revolving around tobacco and the challenges of quitting. Share the facts in a non-threatening way.
- Help them make a list of reasons why they want to quit and tape it on their wall. Are they trying to save money for a new phone or a new computer? Are they trying to perform better in a sport? Are they trying to be a positive role model for their younger siblings? They can refer to this list whenever they feel tempted.
- Both of you may need to prepare for the mood swings and general crankiness associated with nicotine withdrawal. Here are the 5 Ds that will help them get through the detoxing phase:
 - o **Delay:** the craving will eventually go away with time
 - o **Deep breaths:** take a few deep, calming breaths
 - o **Drink water:** water will flush out the chemicals from the cigarettes
 - o **Do something else:** find a new, healthier habit
 - o **Discuss:** talk to one another about progress made
- Finally, reward your child when he or she quits. Plan something special for them to look forward to.

Test Yourself

1. You should wait until a child is in junior high or high school before warning them about tobacco use.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. "Delay" is one of the steps to quitting tobacco that refers to:
 - a. Take a few calming deep breaths
 - b. Talk about your feelings and thoughts
 - c. Drinking water will flush out the chemicals in your system
 - d. The craving will go away with time.
3. Which of the following is a form of tobacco?
 - a. Chew
 - b. Cigarette
 - c. Pipe
 - d. All of the above.
4. If you smoke or chew tobacco, it's a good idea to tell your kid how much it costs you financially, how it affects your health, and how hard it is to quit to keep them from trying it.
 - a. True
 - b. False
5. Which of the following is NOT a negative side effect of tobacco use?
 - a. Stained teeth
 - b. Bad breath
 - c. Weight gain
 - d. Stained fingernails

Answers: 1.b, 2.d, 3.d, 4.a, 5.c



HOW TO KEEP KIDS TOBACCO FREE



Don't Let Your Relationship Go Up in Smoke

The Basics of Tobacco

Besides being illegal to buy or use if you're under the age of 18 (check your individual state laws), tobacco is really unhealthy. It grows as a green, leafy plant but then is dried and grounded down so it can be smoked. Tobacco comes in various forms: cigars, pipes, cigarettes, chewing tobacco, snuff and snus. Not only is it mixed with hundreds of other dangerous chemicals, tobacco also contains nicotine, which makes it extremely addictive.



BIG DEAL! What's So Bad about Tobacco?

Let your teen know about all of the physical problems that tobacco can cause. It puts extra work on the heart, damages lung tissue, and can even cause cancer. Smoking tobacco also leaves a residual odor on hair and clothes—even after showering or changing clothes. It also causes awfully bad breath and can stain teeth and fingernails. Your teen is not immune to negative side effects if they only use chewing tobacco. Spit and smokeless tobacco can also cause everything from bad breath to stained teeth to tooth decay and even loss of the jaw bone.

Teens who use tobacco are not only putting themselves at risk for a plethora of health problems just from that drug alone, they're putting themselves at risk for other drug use and subsequent health problems. Studies have shown that teenagers who use tobacco are far more likely to try alcohol and other illegal drugs than their non-using peers. It's been proven through multiple studies that if a person gets addicted to tobacco, alcohol and other drugs as a teenager, it is much more difficult for them to quit and stay clean than a person who started using as an adult.



Tips for Talking to Your Teen

Parents who talk often to their children about the dangers of smoking are half as likely to have a child who experiments with tobacco as a parent who never brings it up. This is even true if the parent uses tobacco themselves. Remember that even with the influences of the internet, peers, movies and music, you can be the greatest influence in your child's life. Here are some helpful tips when talking to them about tobacco use:

- Start talking to your kids about tobacco use as early as age 5 or 6, and continue to talk about it through their high school years. Many kids start smoking by the age of 11 and are addicted by the age of 14.
- Establish a two-way dialogue with your children about tobacco. Don't just talk or lecture at them. Let them ask questions, and keep the conversation open and honest.
- Know the facts about tobacco use and objectively discuss them with your children. Teens tend to already believe their parents are over-exaggerating.
- Offer loving but firm advice with clear boundaries and consequences if they try tobacco. Remind your teen that you love them, and that's why you don't want them smoking or chewing tobacco.
- Be involved. Have a sincere interest in what's going on in their lives.
- Reduce availability. Cigarettes can be purchased at any gas station or convenience store, but you should set strict rules on keeping your home tobacco-free.
- Be prepared for other families having different standards of acceptable behavior. If the parents of your teen's friends smoke or allow their children to smoke, tell your teen it is not acceptable for them to do so.
- Explain to them that movies, music artists, or athletes will try to make smoking or chewing tobacco look fun. Try showing them images of the unglamorous side—like images of unhealthy lung tissue versus healthy lung tissue.
- Support recreational alternatives to smoking and provide tobacco-free parties for young people.
- Be an exemplary role model. Practice what you preach. Don't tell them how bad it is for them and then smoke a pack a day.



Don't Wait Too Long: Julie's Story

On the surface, Julie's life looked perfect. She and her husband lived in a big house in a great neighborhood, and they had tons of friends. Their children Thomas and Addie were hard-working students, decent athletes, respectful and never got into trouble. That all changed once Thomas got into high school.

Julie started noticing Thomas was more reclusive from the family, and she also noticed a foul odor on his clothes. She thought it smelled like cigarette smoke, but she was in denial. "Thomas would never smoke; maybe he just sits next to students in class who do smoke, and the smell is just wearing off on him." A few months went by, and Julie found pieces of paper on the floor near Thomas's gym bag. He had just dumped his bag from basketball practice in the foyer and had run upstairs to shower. "That's so unlike him; he usually is so good about picking up after himself," she thought to herself, completely exasperated. She opened up the gym bag to put the paper back in, and there it was in the little side pocket—a pack of cigarettes!

Completely dismayed, Julie couldn't believe how this had happened. She had never talked to her kids about smoking, so how would they even know about it? That's when she realized—she had never talked to them about smoking. Of course they wouldn't know about all of the dangers of it. She waited for Thomas and Addie to both get home, and they all had a long, productive talk about tobacco and smoking.

A few more months had passed by, and things were back to normal. Thomas had stopped smoking, especially when he recognized he wasn't as able to perform as well at basketball practice. His grades began to improve, and Addie was proud of her older brother for quitting. Julie was proud, too.