Talking to Teens About Tobacco Cessation Using the 5As

**Ask the Right Questions**

Ask teen patients about their tobacco use in the context of routine screening

Ask about use of traditional and alternative tobacco products, using words that teens will understand

Ask about tobacco and e-cigarette use among their family and friends

“Do you ever use any tobacco products, like cigarettes or hookah?”

“Do your friends use tobacco?”

“Do your friends vape, or use e-cigarettes or e-hookah?”

“Have you ever tried e-cigarettes?”

**Advis**

Advise against tobacco use, and Assess readiness to quit

If the teen is using tobacco, even once in awhile, talk with him or her about stopping.

Messages should:

• **Be Clear:** Explain that smoking or using e-cigarettes will cause nicotine addiction. Explain that stopping tobacco use is an important way to protect one’s health, and let the teen know you can help.

• **Be Personalized:** Explain how quitting tobacco might benefit the teen’s other interests. For example, it can improve athletic performance, or allow the teen to save money to spend on hobbies or activities.

• **Resonate with Teens:** Explain that quitting tobacco is good for one’s health, and helps avoid things like bad breath, stained teeth, prematurely wrinkled skin, or smelling like smoke. Explain that quitting makes a teen more independent, because he or she is no longer addicted to nicotine.

• **Counteract the Tobacco Industry’s Lies:** Explain that the tobacco industry targets teens by making tobacco seem cool or attractive. Counter these lies with the truth: tobacco is harmful and takes away a teen’s independence.

Ask the teen if he or she is interested in quitting tobacco use.

**Assist: If a Teen is Ready to Quit**

Help the teen set a quit date. Avoid major stressors, such as final exams. Anticipate challenges and identify strategies for success, such as:

• Coping with withdrawal symptoms

• Handling situations that raise the risk of tobacco use

• Finding social support from family and friends

If the teen demonstrates severe tobacco dependence or has withdrawal symptoms, consider off-label use of tobacco dependence treatment medications effective in adults.

**DO NOT recommend e-cigarettes.** E-Cigarettes prolong nicotine addiction and increase progression to tobacco dependence in adolescents. They are not an effective tobacco dependence treatment.

Provide resources to help the teen quit tobacco successfully, such as the National Cancer Institute’s SmokefreeTXT, teen.smokefree.gov, and 1 800 QUIT NOW.

**Assist: If a Teen is Not Ready to Quit**

Discuss the 5 Rs:

• Relevance of quitting

• Risks of not quitting

• Rewards related to quitting

• Roadblocks that may arise

• Repetition: it may take several quit attempts to succeed

Use examples that are personally relevant to the teen.

Offer encouragement, and ask them start thinking about stopping

Assure them that you are there to help when they’re ready to stop

**Arrange a Follow-up Discussion**

Talk with the teen by phone, text, email or in the office to see how the quit attempt is going. Relapse is common, and support from a provider can help the teen learn from relapse and lead to eventual success.