

Teens and Tobacco Use

Most teenagers are aware that tobacco use is a leading cause of death. However, this doesn't stop them from trying tobacco products. Trying tobacco just one time puts teens at risk for addiction to nicotine. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports actions to help prevent teens from using tobacco, including restricting advertising and raising the product prices and purchase age of tobacco products. This fact sheet offers facts and tips for parents to help address teen tobacco use.

Health Concerns and Fast Facts

- Health problems caused by tobacco use include frequent coughing, increased phlegm, and breathing problems¹
- 90% of daily tobacco users begin by age 18²
- According to the 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey, 31.2% of high school students and 12.5% of middle school students reported current use of a tobacco product. Among them, 33.9% reported current use of two or more tobacco products³
- Types of tobacco products used by high school students in 2019: e-cigarettes- 27.5%, cigars (including small cigars or cigarillos)- 7.6%, cigarettes- 5.8%, smokeless tobacco- 4.8%, hookah- 3.4%, pipes- 1.1%³
- Factors that can influence tobacco use are:⁴
 - Use of tobacco products by friends or family members
 - Lack of parental support or involvement
 - Accessibility, availability, and price of tobacco products
 - Low levels of academic achievement
 - Low self-esteem
 - Exposure to tobacco advertising (including in movies, TV, or video games)

Tips to Keep Teens From Using Tobacco Products

- Be a role model for your children. Children of current and former smokers face a higher risk of becoming a smoker. If you smoke, try to quit. Talk to your children about the health effects of tobacco and encourage them not to start using it.
- Be aware of tobacco use that children see in movies, TV, and video games. Children who are exposed to tobacco use on screen are more likely to experiment with tobacco products in real life.⁴
- Tell your children about the negative impacts of smoking. Smoking hurts athletic ability, causes wrinkles, stinky breath, stained teeth, and costs a lot of money.
- If teens do start to smoke, encourage them to quit. By quitting, people can add years to their lives. It isn't easy, but every attempt should be considered a success. For more information on how to help teens with a quit attempt, visit the [AAP Richmond Center website](#).
- Think beyond cigarettes. Smokeless tobacco, hookah, e-cigarettes, and other tobacco products are all addictive and can cause health problems. None are safe to use.

References:

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health. You(th) and Tobacco. [online] Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/youth/information-sheet/index.htm. Updated February 13, 2018. Accessed January 28, 2020.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health. Youth and Tobacco Use. [online] Available at: https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm. Updated December 10, 2019. Accessed January 28, 2020.
3. Wang TW, Gentzke AS, Creamer MR, et al. Tobacco Product Use and Associated Factors Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2019. *MMWR Surveill Summ* 2019;68(No. SS-12):1–22. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.ss6812a1>
4. National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (US) Office on Smoking and Health. *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta (GA): Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US); 2012. Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22876391>