

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL—Pinellas County



Take a Stand Help Keep Your Kids Tobacco-Free

What Parents Should Know

Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States, causing heart disease, cancer and strokes.

Kids who use tobacco may:

- ◇ Cough and have asthma attacks more often and develop breathing problems leading to more sick days, more doctor bills, and poorer sports performance.
- ◇ Be more likely to use alcohol and other drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.
- ◇ Become addicted to tobacco and find it extremely hard to quit.

Spit tobacco and cigars are not safe alternatives to cigarettes. Low-tar and additive-free cigarettes are not safe either.

◇ Despite the impact of movies, music, and TV, parents can be the **greatest influence** in their kids' lives.

◇ Talk directly to children about the risks of tobacco use. If friends or relatives died from tobacco-related illnesses, let your kids know.

◇ If you use tobacco, you can still make a difference. Your best move is to try to quit. Meanwhile, don't use tobacco in your children's presence, don't offer it to them and don't leave it where they can easily get it.

◇ Start talking to your kids about tobacco use around age 5 or 6 and continue through their high school years. Many kids start using tobacco by age 11 and many are addicted by age 14.

◇ Know if your kids' friends use tobacco. Talk about ways to refuse tobacco.

◇ Discuss the false glamorization of tobacco products. Talk about how billboard and magazine advertisements, as well as, some movies and TV shows try to make kids think smoking is cool, sexy, and fun.

*Communication Is
the Key*



Prove you're listening: Ask questions. **Pretending** to listen is easy. **Really** listening is tougher. You have to pay attention and ask follow-up questions. If you rarely listen to your child when he or she wants to talk, your child will be less likely to open up when you really want to connect

Share your day: Every parent has heard it: "How's your day," the parent asks the child. "Fine," the child responds. Then silence. One way to help your child open up is to first share a brief story about your day.

What Your Kids Should Know

Tobacco and Sports

- Don't get trapped. Nicotine in cigarettes, cigars and spit tobacco is addictive.
- Nicotine narrows your blood vessels and puts strain on your heart.
- Smoking can wreck your lungs and reduce oxygen available for muscles used during sports.
- Smokers have shortness of breath almost three times more often than nonsmokers.
- Smokers run slower and can't run as far, affecting overall athletic performance.



Tobacco and Personal Appearance

- Yuck! Tobacco smoke can make your hair and clothes stink.
- Tobacco stains your teeth and causes bad breath.
- Short-term use of spit tobacco can cause you to have cracked lips, white spots, sores and bleeding in your mouth.

Know the Truth

- Know the truth. Despite all the tobacco use on TV and in movies, music videos, billboards and magazines most teens, adults and athletes DON'T use tobacco.
- Make friends, develop athletic skills, control weight, be independent and cool by **not** using tobacco products.
- Don't waste (burn) money on tobacco. Spend it on CDs, clothes, computer games and movies.

Get Involved

- Work to make your team, school and home tobacco-free.
- Teach others about the dangers of tobacco.
- Join community efforts to prevent tobacco use.

www.cdc.gov

Cigars and Spit Tobacco Are NOT Safe Alternatives.

All tobacco, whether you smoke or chew it, can cause cancer. The difference is that chewing tobacco causes cancer in the mouth, cheek and gums. Surgery to remove oral cancers can lead to serious changes in the face. Sometimes removing the jaw and parts of the mouth is necessary.



Chewing tobacco also may cause tooth decay and stained teeth. In addition, the cancers caused by chewing tobacco can develop quickly, not just when a person gets older.

Cigar smokers may spend up to an hour smoking one large cigar. This cigar contains the same amount nicotine and chemicals as an entire pack of cigarettes.

It is important to understand there is no such thing as safe smoke or safe tobacco. Keep your mouth safe by not using any tobacco products.

www.lungsandiego.org



The Florida Tobacco Quit-For-Life Line offers free, confidential, comprehensive telephone counseling to help you quit smoking. For more information and support on quitting smoking call 1-877-822-6669.



Funding for this newsletter was supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 03135 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Government.

For information about Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County visit our website: www.StepsFL.com or call 727-820-4113