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SP681-N-Tobacco Use

The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service

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Spotlighting Teen Issues

**for
Teens**

Tobacco Use

Whitney Danhof, Agent - Bedford County, UT Extension

Smoking and tobacco use may seem cool. It may seem like everyone is doing it so it's no big deal. The truth is it is a big deal. Tobacco is addictive and using it can affect you for the rest of your life — even shorten your life. We all know that tobacco use causes cancer and emphysema and other long-term problems. But, it also has many short-term effects. So before you light up or put a plug of chewing tobacco in your mouth, take a look at some of the common myths and learn the facts. Then you can decide your future.

- Using tobacco will make me look older and more attractive to others.
- Smoking stains your teeth so they look old and yellow. It robs the skin of oxygen and nutrients so you look pale and unhealthy. Smoking also interferes with the body's ability to produce collagen, which causes skin to wrinkle more easily. Short-term use of spit tobacco can cause cracked lips, white spots, sores and bleeding in the mouth. So it does make you look older — but not in a good way. In a study, 86 percent of teens across the country said they would rather date people who don't smoke. The smell left in your clothes and hair and on your breath doesn't make you more attractive either.
- Smoking will help me relax from the pressures of daily life.
- Nicotine causes decreased circulation, increased heart rate and shortness of breath. Find healthy ways to deal with stress, such as playing sports, taking dance or yoga lessons, listening to music or hanging out with friends.
- Smoking is a way to set myself apart and be unique.
- Surveys show that most teens don't want to hang around smokers so while you may be unique you may also be alone. Express your uniqueness by being yourself. Use and develop your talents or express yourself through your hairstyle or clothing — these things won't ruin your health.
- Smoking won't interfere with my athletic performance.
- Smoking damages your lungs and reduces the amount of oxygen available for muscles to use during sports. Smokers suffer shortness of breath almost three times more often than nonsmokers. Smokers run slower and can't run as far, affecting overall athletic performance. Smoking also affects the body's ability to heal from common sport injuries, such as damage to tendons and ligaments.
- I'll just smoke with my friends while in high school and then quit later.
- Nicotine is highly addictive. The body and mind quickly become used to it so that a person needs to have it just to feel normal. The younger you are when you start smoking, the more likely you are to develop a long-term addiction. Some teens report signs of addiction with only occasional smoking. The best way to avoid becoming addicted is not to start at all.



- Smoking not only affects your health, appearance and athletic ability, but tobacco products also cost a lot of money. Instead of wasting your money on tobacco, spend it on music, clothes, computer games or other things you enjoy.

Tobacco-free Tips

- Choose friends who don't smoke or chew.
- Have an answer ready for when someone offers you a cigarette.
 - “No thanks, ...
 - I play football and need to stay in shape.”
 - I have a date and don't want to smell like smoke.”
 - I just don't like it.”
 - I made a pact with my boyfriend not to smoke.”
- Find healthy activities you enjoy.
 - Play sports.
 - Take lessons in music, art, dance or whatever interests you.
 - Go window-shopping at the mall.
 - Walk the dog.
 - Join a club or after-school group with similar interests.
 - Volunteer with a community organization or help with a special event.
- Make a commitment to take care of yourself and to stay healthy and tobacco free. Your future depends on the choices you make now.

WARNING: There is no safe tobacco product. The use of any tobacco product can cause cancer and other adverse health effects. This includes all forms of tobacco — cigarettes, cigars, pipes, spit tobacco, mentholated, low-tar, naturally grown or additive-free.



For More Information

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

American Heart Association
www.amhrt.org

American Lung Association
www.lungusa.org

National Cancer Institute Cancer Information Service
www.cancer.gov

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/tobacco

Medline Plus (U.S. National Library of Medicine and National Institutes of Health)
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/smoking.html

Teen Health by Nemours Foundation
www.kidshealth.org/teen/

References

What You(th) Should Know About Tobacco. Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/educational_materials/yuthfax1.htm#What

Raising Kids Who Don't Smoke. Vol.2: Issue 1. Youth Smoking Prevention, Philip Morris USA. <http://www.philipmorrisusa.com/en/prc/activities/downloadresources.asp>

Facts You Should Know. Centers for Disease Control, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tips_4_youth/facts.htm

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