



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Smoking & Tobacco Use

Information Sheet

Esta página en
Español

You(th) & Tobacco

What You(th) Should Know About Tobacco

Tobacco and Athletic Performance



- Don't get trapped. Nicotine in cigarettes, cigars, and spit tobacco is addictive.
- Nicotine narrows your blood vessels and puts added strain on your heart.
- Smoking can wreck lungs and reduce oxygen available for muscles used during sports.
- Smokers suffer shortness of breath (gasp!) almost 3 times more often than nonsmokers.
- Smokers run slower and can't run as far, affecting overall athletic performance.
- Cigars and spit tobacco are NOT safe alternatives.

Tobacco and Personal Appearance



- Yuck! Tobacco smoke can make hair and clothes stink.
- Tobacco stains teeth and causes bad breath.
- Short-term use of spit tobacco can cause cracked lips, white spots, sores, and bleeding in the mouth.
- Surgery to remove oral cancers caused by tobacco use can lead to serious changes in the face. Sean Marcee, a high school star athlete who used spit tobacco, died of oral cancer when he was 19 years old.

SO . . .



- 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, be cool ... play sports.
- Don't waste (burn) money on tobacco. Spend it on CDs, clothes, computer games, and movies.
- Get involved: make your team, school, and home tobacco-free; teach others; join community efforts to prevent tobacco use.

What Parents Should Know

Parents—Help Keep Your Kids Tobacco-Free



- Kids who use tobacco may

- Cough and have asthma attacks more often and develop respiratory problems, leading to more sick days, more doctor bills, and poorer athletic 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.
- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States, causing heart disease, cancers, and strokes.

Take a Stand at Home—Early and Often



- 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, of course, 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 the dialog about tobacco use at 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 with kids the false glamorization of tobacco on billboards and in other media, such as movies, TV, and magazines.

Make a Difference in Your Community



- Vote with your pocketbook. Support businesses that don't sell tobacco to kids. Frequent restaurants and other places that are tobacco-free.
- Be sure your schools and all school events (i.e., parties, sporting events, etc.) are tobacco-free.
- Partner with your local tobacco prevention programs. Call your local health department or your cancer, heart, or lung association to learn how you can get involved.

What Coaches Should Know

Coaches—You Can Influence Youth



- Smoking slows lung growth, decreases lung function, and reduces the oxygen available for muscles used in sports.
- Smokers suffer from shortness of breath almost 3 times more often than nonsmokers.
- Nicotine is addictive in ways like heroin and cocaine.
- Young people who do not start using tobacco by age 18 will most likely never start.
- Young people who use tobacco may be more likely to use alcohol and other drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.
- Spit tobacco and cigars are NOT safe alternatives to cigarettes; low-tar and additive-free tobacco products are not safe either.
- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States, causing heart and lung diseases, cancers, and strokes.

Take a Stand—Early and Often



- Recognize your influence with young people. Don't use tobacco around players. Remind them of the importance of being tobacco-free.
- When talking to players, remember they relate more to messages about the immediate effects of tobacco use (such as poorer athletic performance) than to its long-term health threats.
- Adopt and enforce a tobacco-free policy for players, coaches, and referees.
- Send a copy of the tobacco-free policy home for parents to review.
- Make all practices, games, and competitions tobacco-free—on the field and sidelines and in the stands.
- Announce and display tobacco-free messages at games.
- Consider partnering with your local tobacco prevention