

Talking to Teens About Tobacco Use



Clinical interventions to prevent initiation of tobacco use among youth can protect patients' lives, especially when they occur with other initiatives such as mass media campaigns, smoke-free communities, higher tobacco prices, school programs, and family involvement.

The five As of smoking cessation (*ASK* about tobacco use every visit, *ADVISE* smokers to quit, *ASSESS* the patient's readiness to quit, *ASSIST* in creating a quit plan, *ARRANGE* follow-up care) are great conversation starters. Here are some other points you can make to your adolescent patients.

ADVICE ON TALKING WITH YOUR TEEN PATIENTS

- **Ask** what your patients know about smoking and health, and help them fill in the gaps. Tell them they are more susceptible to nicotine addiction than adults. Smoking does make you sick and can do so even if you're not a heavy smoker or a longtime smoker. Most teen smokers already have early cardiovascular damage, and smoking can have immediate effects on athletic performance, activity level, and endurance.
- **Tell them** fewer than one out of five high school students smoke, but nearly four out of five of them end up smoking into adulthood, even if they plan to quit in a few years.
- **Remind them** that all tobacco products—even the smokeless ones—contain nicotine and can cause addiction.
- **Share** some of the tobacco industry's marketing myths—that smoking is cool, popular, or can make you thin, for example—then share the truth:
 - Most teens don't like smoking. Fewer than a third say it's OK to be around smokers.
 - Teens don't want to date smokers. Most high school seniors prefer to date nonsmokers.
 - As a group, teen smokers are no thinner than their nonsmoking peers.
- **Remind them** it's much easier to say no in the first place than to quit later.

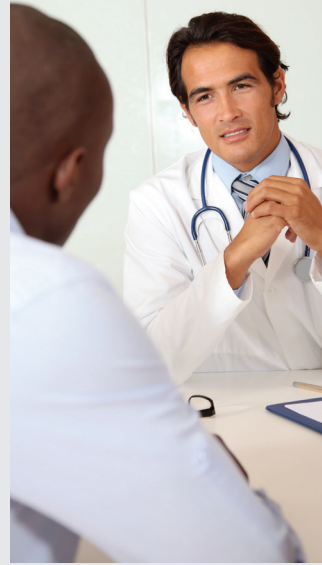
In addition to clinical cessation treatment and advice, www.teen.smokefree.gov can help teens quit smoking. For stories of real people living with the consequences of smoking, tell your patients to go to www.cdc.gov/tips.



Talking to Parents About Tobacco Use

Parents can be powerful allies in your efforts to prevent your patients from using tobacco and to protect them from secondhand smoke (SHS) exposure. The following information can help you persuade parents to be actively engaged in keeping their children safe from the health effects of smoking:

- Infants and children are especially vulnerable to serious health consequences from SHS exposure. Infants whose parents smoke in the home or family vehicles are more likely to die from SIDS. Children regularly exposed to SHS have more ear infections, asthma attacks, and upper respiratory infections than children who are not exposed. Parents should not allow anyone to smoke around their children.*
- Nicotine is a highly addictive drug, and youth are particularly susceptible to nicotine addiction. The younger they are when they start smoking, the greater their risk for addiction and the more strongly addicted they will become.*
- Teens tend to underestimate the powerful addictive effect of nicotine. Nearly four out of five high school smokers will become adult smokers, even if they intend to quit after a few years.*
- Smoking has immediate health effects, even for young people. As an example, smoking can decrease athletic performance, activity level, and endurance. Even adolescent smokers exhibit cardiovascular damage, including early signs of abdominal aortic atherosclerosis; those most sensitive die very young.*
- One of the most important examples parents can set for their children is to stop smoking.* Parents can call 1-800-QUIT-NOW or go to www.smokefree.gov for free help with quitting.
- Even very young children can understand that smoking makes people sick.
- Teens don't like to be preached to, but studies show they're less likely to smoke if their parents are clear that they disapprove of tobacco use.* They also respond when parents share their own struggles with tobacco use and their own regrets over having smoked in the first place.



*Source: *Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2012.

For more information and resources, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/>, <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/>, or the American Academy of Pediatrics Julius B. Richmond Center resources for clinicians and clinical practice at http://www2.aap.org/richmondcenter/Clinicians_ClinicalPractice.html.

For information to help patients quit smoking, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/groups/health-care-providers.html>.

