

Parenting Kids Who Don't Smoke

Talk together in ways that matter.





Smoking and Kids: The Latest Trends

One out of every two high-school students admits to trying cigarette smoking (even if it's to take one or two puffs). One out of five says they have smoked in the past 30 days. 2

If you think your child is too young to try smoking, think again. By eighth grade, one out of five students has tried smoking cigarettes.³ Some kids try smoking as early as age 10. ⁴



"Parents are the single most important influence on children's decision to smoke, drink or use drugs, yet many parents do not fully understand the extent of their influence."

(The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. Malignant Neglect: Substance Abuse and America's Schools. 2001.) It's not too early to talk to your kids about not smoking, even if they're in elementary school. If your child is a teenager and doesn't smoke, the discussions shouldn't stop. Your teen is still at risk.

If you can prevent kids from smoking, chances are greater that they won't smoke as adults. "Nearly two decades of . . . research demonstrates that a child who gets through age 21 without smoking, abusing alcohol, or using illegal drugs is virtually certain never to do so." 5

Even though smoking numbers are down since their latest peak,⁶ 14 percent of 9th graders, 20 percent of 10th graders, 22 percent of 11th graders, and 27 percent of 12th graders have smoked a cigarette in the past 30 days.⁷ And that's too many. We hope you'll agree that the time is now to talk to your kids to help prevent them from smoking.

Could Your Child Become a Smoker?

Every child is in danger of smoking cigarettes. Take this quiz to help assess your child's risk. Place an X next to each question that you answer "yes" to.

- **1. Do you or your spouse smoke?** Studies have found that kids who have a parent who smokes cigarettes are twice as likely to smoke.¹⁷
- 2. Do any of your other kids smoke? Having a brother or sister who smokes triples a child's odds of smoking.¹⁸
- 23. Does your child hang around with other kids who smoke? The smoking rate among kids who have three or more friends who smoke is 10 times higher than the rate among kids who report that none of their friends smoke.¹⁹
- 4. Does your child think smoking is okay?

 Kids who think smoking is socially acceptable and common are much more likely to smoke.²⁰

 They're also more likely to drink alcohol and use marijuana.²¹

Continued in box on next page . . .



Your Child's Health RISR

Why should you talk about not smoking with your child? The public health community makes these important points:

Addiction

- The younger people are when they start smoking, the more likely they are to develop a long-term addiction.⁸
- Some kids report signs of addiction with only occasional (non-daily) smoking.^{9 10}

Short-term effects

Young people who smoke:11

- · Are more susceptible to respiratory illnesses.
- · Experience shortness of breath more often than those who don't.
- May have impaired lung growth and function.

Long-term effects

- More Americans die from tobacco-related illnesses than from car accidents, alcohol, firearms, illegal drugs, and HIV/AIDS combined.¹²
- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.
 Cigarette smoking causes most cases. Smoking is a major cause of heart disease, emphysema and stroke, and increases the risk of oral cancer and gum disease.¹³
- The Centers for Disease Control estimates that cigarettes take approximately 14 years off a smoker's life.¹⁴
- Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, and 250 are harmful.¹⁵
- Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in this country.¹⁶

" My parents have made their feelings clear. They don't let anyone smoke in their house or car, and they don't approve of teen smoking under any circumstance. I think they would be very disappointed if I ever smoked."

-Mike, California

... continued

The more questions you answered "yes" to, the higher your child's risk of smoking is. Whether or not you answered "yes" to any of the questions, it's important to start talking with your kids about tobacco use today.

- 6. Is your child having trouble in school?

 Smoking has been linked repeatedly to poor academic achievement.²³
- 7. Do you live in an area where many kids smoke? The social norms for smoking vary by community and by state. While 62 percent of teens in Kentucky have smoked cigarettes, only 25 percent of teens in Utah have.²⁴
- 8. Is your child depressed? Several studies have associated cigarette smoking and symptoms of depression among teenagers.²⁵
 - Does your child have a lot of unsupervised time after school? Students who are engaged in structured after-school programs, such as sports, music, the arts, or clubs, have a lower risk of smoking compared to kids who are unsupervised.²⁶



Talk to Your Child

One conversation with your kids about not smoking isn't enough. Introduce the subject when your child is still very young in simple language and with clear rules. As your child grows, repeat the message in terms your child can relate to.

Even if you feel very passionate about not smoking, it's important that you remain calm and relaxed when raising the subject with your child. Keep it light. Nothing turns off kids more than a lecture. Don't do all the talking. Ask questions and truly listen to your child's answers, without judging.



- Look for openings. Be alert for opportunities to talk about smoking. If your daughter asks for permission to go to a party on Friday night, talk about the situations she might encounter there and how she can deal with them. If your son mentions the rules his high school coach has set down for a team, discuss some of the health reasons for those rules.
- State your own values clearly. Younger children may respond well to simple rules, such as "In this family we don't smoke. I don't want you to smoke." As your child grows older, she may be more concerned with fitting in with peers. But she is still listening closely to what you have to say—even if it doesn't feel that way at times.
- Emphasize what matters to your child. You know your child better than anyone. That puts you in a great position to know which messages about not smoking may make the biggest impression.
- " My parents are involved in everything I do. If I go out, I have to leave the phone number and call home to check in."
 - —Jessica, Pennsylvania
- Focus on short-term consequences. As adults, we know that smoking leads to life- threatening illnesses such as heart disease, emphysema, and lung cancer. But most kids don't worry about long-term risks. They can't imagine what it's like to be older or to be sick. Make sure you also focus on the immediate consequences of smoking. Kids don't like bad breath, smelly clothes, yellow teeth, or poor performance in sports, which are all caused by smoking. You might also point out that even kids who don't smoke daily may report signs of addiction.^{27 28}
- Run a reality check. Kids tend to overestimate the number of children their age and older who engage in all sorts of risky behaviors, including smoking, using drugs, and drinking alcohol. Make sure your child knows that the large majority of high school students don't smoke.²⁹
- Talk about peer pressure. Acknowledge some of the tough situations your child may face, and suggest
 positive ways of dealing with them. Remember, too, that positive peer pressure can help keep your child away
 from tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Talk about classmates and friends your child admires who don't engage
 in these behaviors.
- **Point out the costs.** Figure out together how much it would cost each year to smoke and how many hours it would take, at typical teen wages, to earn that. Then talk about what else your kids might do with that money.
- **Set the rules.** Tell your child the consequences for smoking in your family. If you discover your child is smoking, make sure you follow through on the consequences you set.



The Power of the 40 Assets to Influence Smoking

Too often we say that kids who are poor or who live in single-parent homes are at a higher risk for smoking cigarettes.³⁰ While that's true when you compare them with kids who live in two-parent households and who have greater financial resources,31 there is something that has a bigger impact on whether or not a child will smoke. What's the difference? The 40 Developmental Assets.32

The Developmental Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed.33 These assets are concrete building blocks that are essential to raising successful kids.34 Research shows that the more assets kids have:36

- the better choices they'll make;
- the less likely they'll get in trouble and engage in risky behaviors, such as smoking and using smokeless tobacco;
- the more likely they'll become caring, responsible adults.

The Asset Categories:



Support



Commitment to Learning



Empowerment



Positive Values





Social Competencies





Positive Identity

What's the big deal about the Developmental Assets in preventing kids from smoking? When you compare young people with few assets (10 assets or fewer) with young people with a lot of assets (31 to 40 assets), you see that young people are much more likely to smoke if they have few assets.

Find a Good Time to Talk

Sometimes, the most powerful parent-child conversations take place while the two of you are doing something else. Kids might be more comfortable if they don't have to look at you directly while they're talking about important issues. Here are a few places and ways to talk about not smoking so that kids can make the right decisions:

- Exercising or playing sports. This is a great time to mention how smoking can affect one's fitness and athletic abilities.
- Driving. Smart parents have often utilized this "captive audience" opportunity. Don't launch into a lecture. Instead, ask your child for his or her opinions.
- · Shopping. Talk about how we make choices when we spend money. Smokers use their money to buy cigarettes. Nonsmokers use their money to buy other things that interest them.
- Watching TV or a movie. Wonder aloud why the director or writer had a particular character smoke. Use this to reaffirm your disapproval of smoking.
- Going out to eat. Ask to be seated in the nonsmoking section of a restaurant and use it as an opportunity to talk about not smoking.

Consider this national research:37

Teens who smoke with 0 to 10 assets: 34% 11 to 20 assets: 17% 6% 21 to 30 assets: 31 to 40 assets: 1%

Research consistently shows that when young people have a lot of assets, they're less likely to smoke and to take part in other risky behaviors, such as drink alcohol, have sex as a teenager, and use drugs.38

The same trend is also true for teens who use smokeless tobacco:39

Teens who use smokeless tobacco with:

0 to 10 assets: 11% 11 to 20 assets: 5% 21 to 30 assets: 2% 31 to 40 assets: 0%



Already Smokes

If you suspect (or know) that your child is smoking, you still need to talk about your values and all the reasons not to smoke. The hardest part can be managing your own feelings of anger, guilt, or disappointment. Resist the urge to punish or shame your child, and don't launch into a lecture. Your child is likely to shut down and tune you out, when you really need to have a conversation.

Instead, talk about things you've noticed, such as friends who smoke or clothes smelling like smoke. For example say, "I'm concerned that you might be thinking about smoking, or are already using cigarettes." Without accusing, talk about situations, people, or feelings that might be encouraging your child to smoke. Describe your concerns: "You know how I feel about smoking, and it's very easy to get addicted to cigarettes." Ask about some of the symptoms of cigarette addiction:⁴⁰

- Do you ever have strong cravings to smoke or feel like you really need a cigarette?
- Do you have trouble concentrating or feel irritable or anxious when you can't smoke?
- · Is it hard to keep from smoking at school or other places you shouldn't smoke?
- · Have you tried to quit but couldn't?

If your child answers "no" to these four questions, or doesn't want to talk, remind your child how important this is to his future life and health, and that you plan to keep talking about it.

Remember: smoking is not just a discipline issue; it's also a medical problem. Encourage your child to talk to his doctor and look for local resources that can help your child quit. Ask your child if he has already considered quitting, and what your child's concerns are.

"My parents talk to me all the time about different things. Sometimes it's hard. But knowing what they think about important things really helps me make up my mind."

---Jillian, New Jersey

Expect Some Rebellion

Finally, expect your child to rebel on occasion. That's part of what adolescence is all about. If you accept safer ways of rebelling—perhaps through fashion, hairstyles, or music—your child may feel less of a need to rebel through smoking, drinking and drug abuse.

Teens at Risk

If a teen ...

3. is living in a single-parent family, chances increase 1.6 times

b. has a low socioeconomic status, chances increase 2.0 times

C. is low in 40 Developmental Assets, chances increase 9.6 times

3. b. c.

Source: Peter Benson, All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 92.



If You Smoke

You may feel uncomfortable about bringing up the subject with your kids if you smoke. Don't let this stop you.

Children whose parents smoke are much more likely to be smokers than children whose parents do not smoke. 41 42 But research shows that kids whose parents quit smoking are less likely to smoke and more likely to quit if they had started smoking. 43 Parents who talk regularly to their kids about not smoking are less likely to raise kids who smoke, even if those parents smoke. 44 So it's crucial that you talk to your kids about the issue clearly, openly, and often.

If you smoke, here are some great ways to start a conversation with your child:

- "I smoke, but then I tell you not to. Does that seem inconsistent?" It's a myth that you can't talk frankly about smoking with your kids just because you smoke. Explain why you don't want your child to use tobacco and that you want your child to have a healthy life. Don't be afraid to admit it if you wish you hadn't started smoking. Your child will respect your honesty.
- "I notice that you haven't complained about my smoking lately.
 Why is that?" Often, young children who complained about their parents' smoking grow into teens who become silent about the matter. This doesn't mean they won't try smoking. Factors like peer pressure and the accessibility of cigarettes might lead them to try smoking. Just because they've stopped talking about it doesn't mean you should.
- "I've told my kids that starting to smoke was the worst mistake I've ever made in my life. Ever since they started learning in school about the health risks of smoking, we've talked about it. Of course, they want me to quit, and they see how difficult it is to kick the habit."
 - -Mark, a father of teenagers
- "I smoke, but I know the dangers of second-hand smoke." Even if you smoke, you can protect your kids by smoking only outside and not in the car. Research shows that secondhand smoke causes premature disease and death in children and other adults who do not smoke but are exposed to secondhand smoke.⁴⁵

Tips for Smoking Parents

Have you made it clear that you don't want your kids to smoke? Yes No

Kids are less likely to smoke if their parents make it clear that they disapprove. This holds true even when parents smoke.⁴⁶

Have you explained the consequences for smoking? Yes No

Rules don't carry much weight if there aren't consequences for breaking them and rewards for following them. Spell out the consequences for your kids smoking. Then don't hesitate to impose them if necessary.⁴⁷

Do you smoke in front of your child? Yes No

Actions speak louder than words. Think about the nonverbal messages you're sending. Remember, you're still a powerful role model for your child.

Have you shared your struggles to quit smoking? Yes No

Kids severely underestimate how hard it is to give up smoking.⁴⁸ If you've tried to quit in the past, tell your child about how difficult it was. If you're trying to quit now, enlist your family's support and share your daily struggles.

Do you leave your cigarettes lying around the house?Yes No

Easy access to cigarettes may increase the temptation for your child to try one. Be careful about where you leave your cigarettes.

Have you talked about the legal issues? Yes No

The laws vary from state to state, but in it's illegal in almost every state for minors to buy cigarettes.



Helping Kids Handle It

One of the most difficult tasks of childhood is learning how to resist social pressure. Kids influence each other to try new things. Some of these things are good, but some are bad, such as smoking.

- **Recognize** that simply telling kids, to "just say no" probably won't work. Focus on giving your children the confidence and social skills they need to be able to resist social pressure without ruining a friendship.
- **Listen** to your kids, even if you disagree with them. If you belittle their opinions or dismiss their problems, they'll stop talking to you. Instead, acknowledge their feelings and help them think through the different ways they might respond.
- **Prepare** kids to deal with pressures by discussing the types of sticky situations they might confront in the future. Role-playing can be useful. Ask your kids questions such as "What would you say if your best friend offered you a cigarette?" or "What if someone offered you a chocolate-flavored bidi to smoke—or an electronic cigarette?" Practicing specific things to say or do if they are encouraged to smoke can increase their self-confidence.
- Acknowledge to your kids that they may face tough situations. They don't want to risk destroying a
 friendship or appearing "uncool." They may also have practical concerns, like how to get home if their
 driver has been smoking marijuana.
- **Encourage** your kids to get involved in after-school activities where they can practice social skills and perhaps find more nonsmoking friends.
- **Expect** mistakes. Sometimes kids will make a bad decision. That's normal. But remember, kids often learn more by recovering from their mistakes, and by analyzing what they did wrong, than by making the right decision every time.
- Remember that your kids are listening. You've probably noticed that your kids' friends have more and more influence over their everyday choices, such as what clothing to wear, what music to listen to, and how to spend their free time. What you may not realize, however, is that when it comes to really important issues such as their fundamental values and whether they smoke, involved parents have more influence than your child's peers.⁴⁹

Your kids may not look like they're listening to you. It may feel as if they argue with you over everything. But don't be fooled. They really are listening closely and watching what you do as they try to figure out where they fit in the world. The challenges to kids come from many directions: a dare to try a cigarette, a challenge to shoplift a pack of gum, or the pressure to have sex.





Works Both Ways

Kids can learn how to resist negative peer pressure by practicing how to respond to the many situations they're confronted with every day. Keep talking about the pressures they face. Tell them how proud you are when they make good choices. Continue to stay involved in their lives and keep talking about the dangers of smoking.

- "Sometimes, when I'm out with my friends or at a party, somebody will do something like light up a smoke or sneak in some alcohol," says Quinn, a high school student.
- "Basically I think it's pretty stupid, but it seems like every year, more and more people I know are doing stuff like that."





"My parents are really against it, and if you get caught, you get kicked out of activities, and that's too important to me," Quinn says. Remember, peer pressure works both ways. It can lead to good decisions as well as bad.

"When I see a kid smoking, I lose respect for them," says Emma, a teenager. "Not only do they hurt themselves, but they hurt other people around them."

The New Smoking Temptations for Kids

Cigarettes aren't the only things that kids smoke. They're getting bombarded by many other types of tobacco and drugs that can be smoked. Many of these products claim that they are not addictive and that they don't have the long-term consequences of smoking cigarettes. Yet, any type of smoking is dangerous.⁵⁰ What do you know about these smoking products?

- Bidis: small, hand-rolled cigarettes that may have colorful string tied at one or both ends.
 They come in cherry, mango, chocolate, and unflavored.⁵¹
- Kreteks: clove cigarettes imported from Indonesia.⁵²
- Hookahs: water pipes to smoke tobacco in flavors from watermelon to licorice.⁵³

- Electronic cigarettes: these tar-free cigarettes (also known as "Ecigs" or "e-cigarettes") still contain nicotine and have not been evaluated by the FDA.
- Cigars and cigarillos: according to a recent study, 13.6% of high school students smoked cigars in the past 30 days.⁵⁴
- Chewing tobacco: some young people may appear to be chewing gum when they're actually chewing smokeless tobacco. Almost one out of five white high-school-age males currently use smokeless tobacco.⁵⁵
- Marijuana: while 69 percent of teens think that smoking cigarettes is risky, only 34 percent of teens think the same about smoking marijuana.⁵⁶

Resources for Parents from ParentFurther.com



ParentFurther is a website with research-based, practical advice for parents to help them talk to their kids about not smoking—and all kinds of other issues.

Visit ParentFurther online at www.parentfurther.com.

Some of the things you will find on ParentFurther include

- tips on how to talk to your kids about not smoking, including starting the conversation, and ways to listen and respond;
- information on peer pressure and how you can help your kids say no to negative peer pressure and yes to positive peer pressure;
- conversation starters for tough (and easy) issues;
- topics such as your child's sexuality, raising financially savvy kids, and getting kids to help out with household chores;
- a free parenting e-newsletter filled with current topics and practical ideas;
- interactive guizzes and activities;
- links to other helpful resources for more information.

Information on Youth Smoking Prevention

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org

CDC's Youth Tobacco Prevention

www.cdc.gov/tobacco/youth/index.htm

Office of the Surgeon General

www.surgeongeneral.gov

American Lung Association

www.lungusa.org

National Institute on Drug Abuse

www.nida.nih.gov

Quit-Smoking Programs and Health Information

American Cancer Society's Complete Guide to Quitting

www.cancer.org

CDC's Useful Resources to Quit Smoking

www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/index.htm

QuitNet

www.quitnet.com

Smokefree.gov

www.smokefree.gov/info.html

American Council on Science and Health

www.thescooponsmoking.org

Note: Website addresses and content are subject to change.

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