

Smoking Stinks!

Smoking is one of the worst things you can do to your body. Yet every single day, some kids and teens start smoking. Why?

There's more than just one answer. Some kids may start smoking just because they're curious. Others may like the idea of doing something dangerous — something grownups don't want them to do. Still others might know lots of people who smoke and they might think it's a way to act or look like an adult.

What Are Smoking, Smokeless Tobacco, and Vaping?

Tobacco (say: tuh-BA-ko) is a plant that can be **smoked in cigarettes, pipes, or cigars**. It's the same plant that's in **smokeless tobacco**, known as dip, chew, snuff, spit, or chewing tobacco. Smokeless tobacco is not lit or inhaled (breathed in). Instead, it's chewed, sucked on, or even sniffed into the nose.

Vaping is done by using electronic cigarettes (e-cigarettes). Often called "vape pens" or "vapes," these devices heat a liquid until it becomes an aerosol (mist) that can be inhaled.

Tobacco and the liquid in e-cigarettes contain **nicotine** (say: NIK-eh-teen), a chemical that causes a tingly or pleasant feeling — but that feeling only lasts for a little while. Nicotine is very addictive (say: uh-DIK-tiv). That means that if you start to use nicotine, your body and mind will become so used to it that you'll need to have it just to feel OK. If you're addicted to something, it's very hard to stop doing it, even if you want to. Some kids get addicted right away. Adults who smoke or vape are often addicted, which is why so many of them have a hard time quitting.

What Problems Can Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Cause?

Fortunately, fewer people start smoking now than in the past. Maybe that's because more and more people know that smoking and tobacco use can cause cancer and heart disease.

But sometimes kids can't really think that far into the future to worry about an illness they might not get for many years.

So let's talk about the problems that might affect kids more quickly:

- bad breath
- yellow teeth
- smelly clothes
- more colds and coughs
- trouble keeping up with friends when playing sports
- empty wallet — cigarettes and tobacco products are very expensive!

How Do Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Hurt the Body?

Cigarettes and other tobacco products kill many people every year. The nicotine and other poisonous chemicals in them cause lots of diseases, like lung problems, heart problems, and cancer.

If you smoke, you hurt your lungs and heart each time you light up. It also can make it harder for blood to move around in the body, so smokers may feel tired and cranky. The longer you smoke, the worse the damage gets.

The Other Cost of Smoking

Using tobacco eats up a lot of money too. A pack of cigarettes costs about \$8, on average. (This might change from year to year, but let's use that as an example.) That means that even if you buy just one pack a week, you'll spend \$416 in a year. Some people smoke a pack a day, which adds up to almost \$3,000! That's a lot of computer games and clothes you could buy instead.

What's It Like to Smoke, Vape, or Use Smokeless Tobacco?

Usually, people don't like smoking, vaping, or using smokeless tobacco at first. Your body is smart, and it knows when it's being poisoned. When people try smoking for the first time, they often cough a lot and feel pain or burning in their throat and lungs. This is your lungs' way of trying to protect you and tell you to keep them smoke-free.

Also, many people say that they feel sick to their stomachs or even throw up. If someone accidentally swallows chewing tobacco, they may be sick for hours. Gross!

What if My Friend Smokes?

If you have friends who smoke or use other tobacco products, you can help them by encouraging them to quit. Here are some reasons you can mention:

- It will hurt their health.
- It will make their breath stinky.
- It will turn their teeth yellow.
- It will give them less endurance when running or playing sports.
- It's expensive.
- It's illegal to buy cigarettes when you're underage.

If you think it will help, you could share this article with a friend who smokes. They might be interested in learning more about the dangers of smoking.

But people don't like to hear that they're doing something wrong, so your pal also could be a little angry. If that happens, don't push it too much. In time, your friend may realize you're right.

In the meantime, it could help to talk with a parent or a school counselor if you're worried about your friend. When your friend is ready, a grownup can help them quit for good. If your friend decides to quit, lend your support. You might say it's time to kick some butts!

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