

Family Talk About Tobacco

How to talk to your kids about smoking:

It's never too early to talk about tobacco. When you talk to your kids about not using tobacco, you can give them more than just good advice, you can give them a solid defense strategy to say "no." Remember that kids often seem to be defying authority when what they really want are tips they can use to help them resist peer pressure.

- If your child is concerned about appearance, talk about the way smoking causes bad breath, stinky hair and clothes, stains on fingers and teeth, and hair loss.
- Your child will probably be shocked to learn just what goes into a cigarette. Give them a tour of the garage, basement, or under the kitchen sink where you might have some of these chemicals – acetone (nail polish remover), toluene (paint thinner), benzene (gasoline), cadmium (batteries), phenol (disinfectant) – all of which are inhaled with each cigarette.
- If your child is physically active or into sports, talk about the shortness of breath and loss of endurance that tobacco causes.
- Talk about the money it takes to smoke for a week, for a year. What

else could they buy with that money?

- Let your child know that three-quarters of Albertans DON'T smoke.
- Put a human face to addiction. Talk about how hard it is to quit smoking.



What if you smoke yourself?

If you smoke, it's even more important to talk to your children about the effects of smoking. Your kids will likely challenge you: "If you smoke, why can't I?" They are also more likely to smoke than other kids. But studies show you can reduce that risk if you talk to them about it.

- Start at the beginning. Explain why you started. Your friends smoked. You

thought it was adult. You thought it was risky and exciting. You thought you could control it. You didn't know it was addictive.

- Talk about what it's like to be addicted. Share what it's been like trying to quit. Show that you think smoking isn't healthy. Smoke outside at home and ask others to do the same. Benefits to doing this can include:
 - Children are less likely to start smoking tobacco when smoking parents keep their home and car smoke-free.
 - Children will be healthier. Second-hand smoke is related to ear infections, respiratory diseases, asthma and SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome).
 - Even you pet will be healthier!

Tips to keep your kids tobacco-free:

- "No thanks, I don't want my clothes to stink."
- "My girl/boyfriend has a problem with kissing ashtrays, so I'll say no."
- "Why would I want to smoke?"
- "I'm excited about making the team and I think smoking will slow me down."

- "No thanks, I don't want to chance getting hooked. I see people spending \$75 a week on cigarettes."
- "Cancer runs in our family, so I don't want to push my luck."

Here's the best news:

Youth who make it to 19 without smoking will probably never smoke in their lives.

This article was adapted from AADAC and Capital Health resources. For more information on tobacco and/or quitting check out these resources:

- Smoker's Helpline: 1-866-332-2322
- Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission: www.aadac.com
- Health Canada: www.gosmokefree.ca
- Lung Association/Canadian Cancer Society: www.albertaquits.ca

Questions or concerns?

Call Strathcona County Family and Community Services at 780-464-4044.