

# Is It Worth It?

## Dear Parents and Guardians,

Did you know that kids and teens who use tobacco and nicotine products, even infrequently, are at serious risk of health hazards, including addiction—and all the problems that come with it?

Tom Frieden, MD, MPH, and the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says, “We want parents to know that nicotine is dangerous for kids at any age, whether it’s an e-cigarette, hookah, cigarette, or cigar. Adolescence is a critical time for brain development. Nicotine exposure at a young age may cause lasting harm to brain development, promote addiction, and lead to sustained tobacco use.”<sup>1</sup>

In addition, “The 2012 Surgeon General’s Report found that almost 90% of adult smokers first tried cigarettes as teens; and that about 3 of every 4 teen smokers continue into adulthood.”<sup>1</sup>

Fortunately, there’s plenty you can do to help! Even if it doesn’t always seem like it, research indicates kids listen to their parents/guardians—what you say matters!

## HOW TO TALK ABOUT TOBACCO AND NICOTINE WITH YOUR KIDS<sup>2</sup>

- Discuss the topic in a nonjudgmental way.
- Over the years, repeat the conversation and reiterate that tobacco and nicotine are dangerous. Kids’ views, opinions, and behaviors may change, and they need to hear the message repeatedly.
- Ask: What do you find appealing about smoking? Or, what isn’t appealing? Then listen carefully.
- With your kids, compare print, TV, movie, and digital images with reality.
- Promote healthy activities, such as sports, service organizations, and music and arts clubs.
- Demonstrate that your kids’ opinions and ideas are important to you.
- Talk about effective ways to respond to peer pressure. Help kids come up with planned responses they’re comfortable with if someone offers them a cigarette, e-cig, or some other form of tobacco or nicotine product.
- Build self-confidence by focusing on what kids do well. Self-confidence helps kids deal with peer pressure.
- Tell kids their friends and peers should respect their decision not to smoke, and encourage them to walk away from those who won’t.
- Talk about how smoking can take over a person’s life: it affects finances, friendships, where they go, etc.
- Make rules! Off limits: smoking, chewing tobacco, e-cigs, e-hookahs, and all other tobacco and nicotine products. Tell your kids why: Smoking looks, smells, and feels bad, and it’s not good for anyone.



# DO YOU SMOKE?<sup>3</sup>



It's true: if you smoke, your kids are more likely to smoke. But you can still influence your kids' decisions. The best option? Quit. If that's not possible, be tobacco-free around your kids, keep it out of reach, and never offer it to them. Keep your house and vehicle(s) smoke-free. Tell your kids:

- What you thought of nicotine and tobacco when you started smoking—and how you got started
- How it's affected your health, finances, social life
- How hard it is to quit!

## TRYING TO HELP YOUR KIDS STOP SMOKING<sup>2</sup>

Both of you need to get ready for mood swings and irritability: that's part of nicotine withdrawal. Also, provide these tips:

<b>Delay</b>	Don't give in. The craving sensation will go away eventually.
<b>Deep breath</b>	Take one or more. They help!
<b>Drink water</b>	It flushes out the toxins.
<b>Do something else</b>	Take up a healthy habit.
<b>Discuss</b>	Share what you're thinking or feeling.

### ALSO:

- Make a "Quit List"—why does your kid want to quit? Pull out the list when things get tough.
- Celebrate when your kid kicks the habit—it's a big deal!

Want to find out more about the dangers of tobacco and nicotine products, and get additional ideas about how you can help kids be tobacco free? Start here. You can make a difference!

- [www.tobaccofreekids.org/](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/)
- [www.cancer.org/cancer/news/features/e-cigs-flavored-tobacco-your-kids-what-you-should-know](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/news/features/e-cigs-flavored-tobacco-your-kids-what-you-should-know)
- [www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm225210.htm](http://www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm225210.htm)
- [www.drugabuse.gov/parents-educators](http://www.drugabuse.gov/parents-educators)

<sup>1</sup> E-Cigarette Use Triples Among Middle and High School Students, Stacey Simon, April 17, 2015, American Cancer Society. Accessed February 7, 2016. <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/news/news/e-cigarette-use-triples-among-middle-and-high-school-students>

<sup>2</sup> "Child and Teen Tobacco Use." American Cancer Society. Last revised March 6, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> "Kids and Smoking: Prevention Tips." KidsHealth from Nemours. Accessed February 7, 2016. <http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/smoking.html#>

