

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ...

Kids & Tobacco



There is no question that tobacco is dangerous. It causes more illnesses and deaths than all other drugs, including alcohol, heroin, marijuana and cocaine. More people died from tobacco in the past year than in WW I, World War II and the Korean and Vietnam wars combined.

Twenty-three percent of American high school students smoke. And 10 percent of high school boys use smokeless tobacco. Because these tobacco users got hooked at such a young age, experts say they will have a much tougher time trying to quit as adults.

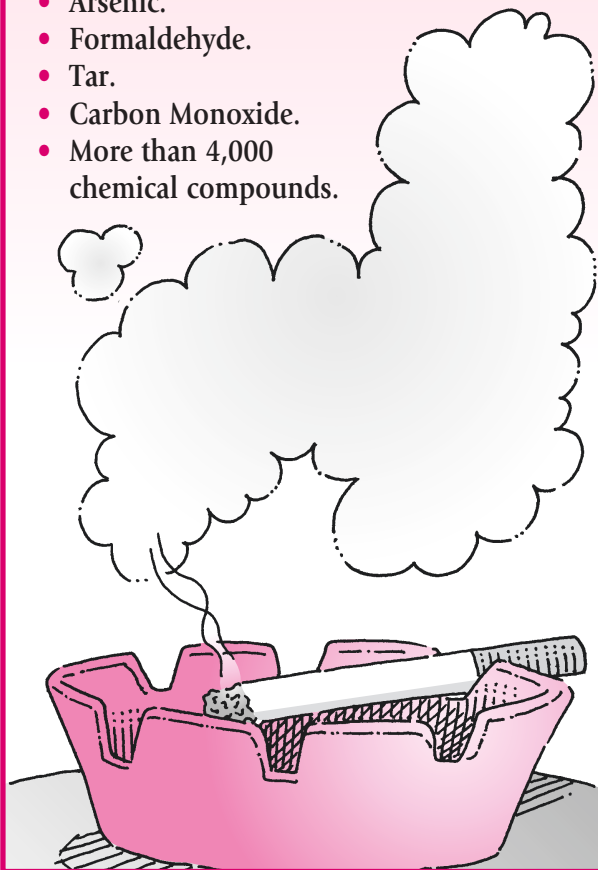
Given what medical science has learned about the harmful health effects of tobacco use—it causes everything from lung cancer to congestive heart failure—you have a right to worry about whether your child has started using tobacco.

Here are the facts you need to know about kids and tobacco.

Why is tobacco dangerous?

Tobacco contains nicotine, a drug that is highly addictive. One estimate says 86.8% of students who smoke at least once daily are addicted to nicotine. It's important for parents and young people to recognize that, just like other drugs, tobacco changes the way the body works. In addition to nicotine, tobacco contains many other dangerous substances. These include:

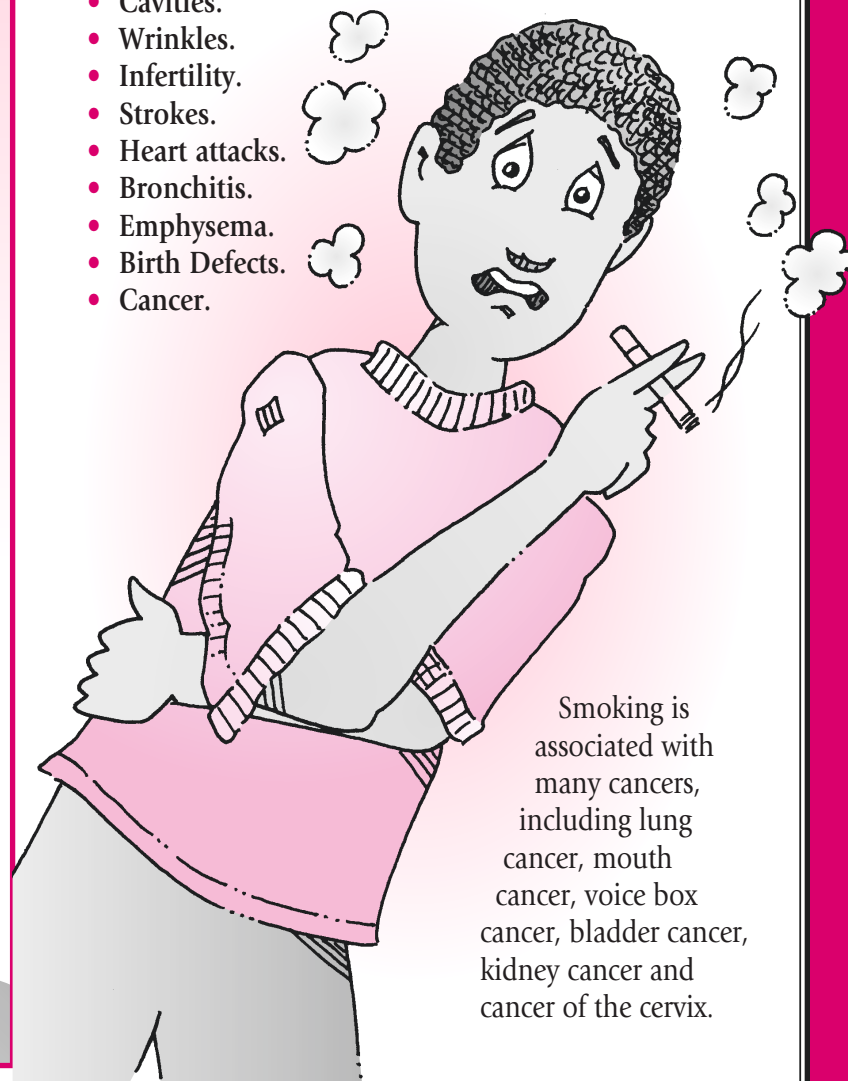
- Arsenic.
- Formaldehyde.
- Tar.
- Carbon Monoxide.
- More than 4,000 chemical compounds.



How does smoking affect the body?

At first, smokers experience coughing, bad breath, a sour taste in their mouth, headaches, shortness of breath, and stained teeth and nails. After longer use, smokers are at risk for:

- Ulcers.
- Cavities.
- Wrinkles.
- Infertility.
- Strokes.
- Heart attacks.
- Bronchitis.
- Emphysema.
- Birth Defects.
- Cancer.



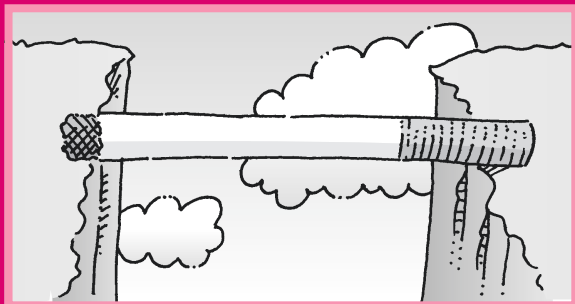
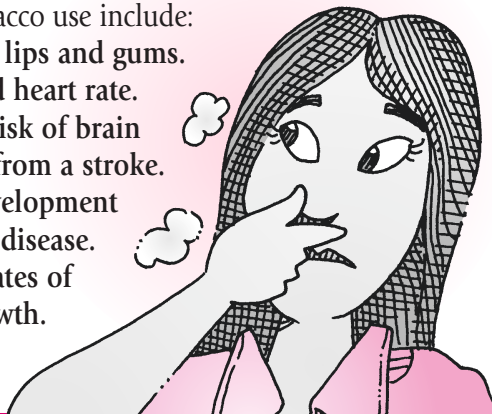
Smoking is associated with many cancers, including lung cancer, mouth cancer, voice box cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer and cancer of the cervix.

What about smokeless tobacco?

Smokeless tobacco also causes cancer of the esophagus, pharynx, larynx, stomach and pancreas. Users of smokeless tobacco are 50 times more likely to get cancer of the mouth than non-users.

Other health problems caused by teenage tobacco use include:

- Bleeding lips and gums.
- Increased heart rate.
- Greater risk of brain damage from a stroke.
- Early development of artery disease.
- Slower rates of lung growth.



TOBACCO: A gateway drug

One particular danger of tobacco is that it is a "gateway drug." Tobacco is often the first drug used by young people who then may go on to use alcohol, marijuana and other drugs.

Why do kids start using tobacco?

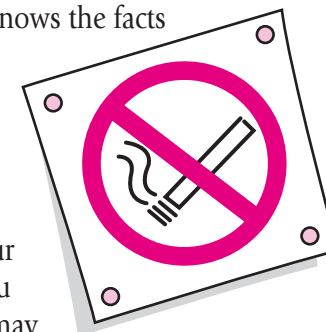
Because their friends do. Both boys and girls say that peer pressure is the number one reason they started using tobacco.

Girls often start to smoke because they think it will help them be slim, sexy, sophisticated and successful. Boys who use smokeless tobacco (very few girls use tobacco in this form) say they are following the example of athletes and other people they admire. Both boys and girls say they were most likely to try a cigarette or smokeless tobacco for the first time when they were with their friends.



What can you do?

- **Make sure your child** knows the facts about tobacco use.
- **Think about** your own tobacco use. If you smoke or use smokeless tobacco, it will be more difficult to persuade your child not to use it. If you have tried to quit, you may wish to talk about how difficult it is to break the tobacco habit.
- **Encourage your child** to take part in sports and other activities.
- **Work with your school** to develop an effective tobacco prevention program. The most effective programs focus on all forms of drug use and send a clear and consistent "no use" message.
- **Remind your child** about the laws for tobacco purchase and use in your state.



If your child is already using tobacco, talk with him calmly about the dangers of tobacco. Explain that you love him and will help him find ways to kick the habit. Ask your school principal, a teacher or counselor about help available in your community.

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