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| [PBS Kids GO!](http://pbskidsgo.org/) | [It's My Life](http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/body/smoking/article2.html) |
| **Smoking: Health Hazards**  FACT: Smoking is the most preventable cause of death in the United States.  This means that many of those who lose their lives because of smoking-related illnesses could probably live much longer if they didn't smoke. Smoking can damage some of the most important organs in your body, including the lungs, heart and brain. The poisonous chemicals in cigarettes can cause emphysema (a lung disease) and bronchitis (inflammation of air passages to the lungs), heart disease, heart attacks, stroke (an interruption of the blood flow to the brain) and cancer.  Here are some other effects that smoking can have on your health:   * Hearing and vision loss * Arthritis * Chronic coughing, more phlegm (mucus) in your mouth and asthma * Decrease in athletic performance. Think about it: you can't run as fast or jump as high if you can't breathe properly! * Cancer of the mouth, gum disease, tooth decay, and yellow staining of the teeth * Peptic ulcers, pancreatic cancer, bladder cancer, kidney and liver damage * Heartburn * Diarrhea * Decreased circulation in the fingers and toes * Yellowing of fingernails and toenails * Bad breath * Wrinkles   Another problem is that smoking is usually not a one-shot deal. It can take only weeks or days for new smokers to become addicted. Why? Because cigarettes contain a drug called Nicotine, the ingredient that causes the addiction. Nicotine is a stimulant, which means it makes you feel a little hyper. The more you smoke, the more you want to continue to smoke. Your body becomes physically dependent on the drug and begins to crave it. This is what makes it so difficult to quit smoking once you've started.  Here are some other interesting (and shocking) facts about smoking:   * Approximately 1500 kids are killed each year by fires in the home that were caused by cigarettes. The tobacco industry has the science to make a self-extinguishing cigarette, but they don't use it! Why? * Cigarette butts are among the biggest causes of pollution on beaches. * Sometimes it seems like all celebs smoke, but most don't! In fact, celebs who have recently made anti-tobacco statements include: Tobey Maguire, Natalie Portman, Jackie Chan, 'NSYNC, Alicia Silverstone, Garth Brooks, Tyra Banks, and Christy Turlington .   **Secondhand Smoke** Even if you don't smoke, just being around people who are smoking can cause health problems. "Secondhand smoke" (also called "sidestream smoke") from someone else's cigarette can be just as dangerous as smoking itself.  Here are some facts about secondhand smoke:   * It kills about 3,000 non-smokers each year from lung cancer. * It causes up to 300,000 lung infections (like pneumonia and bronchitis) in babies and young children each year. * It causes babies to be at risk for SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). * In a crowded restaurant, smoking can produce six times the pollution of a busy highway. * Pets suffer too! It can cause leukemia (a type of cancer) in cats and enlarged hearts in dogs. * It causes 30 times as many lung cancer deaths as all the different kinds of pollution combined. * It causes wheezing, coughing, colds, earaches and asthma attacks. * It fills the air with many of the same poisons found in the air around toxic waste dumps. * It ruins the smell and taste of food. * It causes reddening, itching, and watering of the eyes.   **Smokeless Tobacco** Finally, you may have heard about smokeless tobacco, a sticky substance that you chew, kind of like gum, with a tobacco flavor. This product is also known as "chewing tobacco," "spit tobacco," and "snuff." Many people think that smokeless tobacco isn't harmful to your health the way cigarettes are. Not true! Chewing this stuff can cause bleeding gums, sores in the mouth that never heal, and cancer of the mouth. In addition, it may cause bad breath, hiccups, dizziness, nausea and yellow staining of the teeth. Sounds gross, huh? Like cigarettes, smokeless tobacco contains Nicotine, which makes it addictive. | |
| **Smoking: What's In A Cigarette?**  It's just one cigarette...but wow! That little thing has over 4,000 chemicals in it! You already know that cigarettes contain Nicotine, but did you know that Nicotine is also used in bug spray? Before you decide to light up, you might want to know just what it is that you're inhaling. Below are just a few of the other chemicals found in cigarettes:   * **Tar.** This ingredient, which gives cigarettes flavor, is the same thick black substance used to pave roads and driveways. * **Formaldehyde.** This is the same stuff used to preserve dead animals, like the frogs dissected in some biology classes. * **Cyanide,** which is also a main ingredient in rat poison. * **Lead.** It's also found in some kinds of paint. * **Acetone,** which is a common ingredient in paint and nail polish remover. * **Ammonia.** Besides the fact that it's in many household cleaners, it's also in cigarettes. * **Carbon monoxide,** a common pollutant and the same stuff that escapes from the exhaust in cars. * **Hydrazine,** a chemical used in jets and rocket fuel.   To give you an idea of the harm these substances can do, picture the thick gooey-ness of tar. The average smoker inhales about one cup of tar a year. Because a smoker's lungs often don't work as well as they should, the tar may stick and stay in there for a long time. Tar also hurts the "cilia" in a person's airway, which are tiny hairs that protect the lungs by sweeping out mucus and germs. Tar, like many of the other chemicals in cigarettes, can cause diseases related to how we breathe, like emphysema and bronchitis. | |
| **Smoking: Peer Pressure**  If a friend or classmate has ever pushed you into doing something you don't want to do, then you've experienced *peer pressure*. This is how many kids start smoking. If a popular kid offers you a cigarette, you might think that you'll become popular if you do what he or she says. When a close friend starts smoking, you many worry that you'll lose the friendship if you turn your buddy down.  There are many ways to handle peer pressure. First, remember these two things:   * You don't have to do anything that you don't want to do. * It's perfectly okay to say no. You don't owe anyone an explanation.   But let's face it: saying "no" isn't always easy. Most of us worry about fitting in and what others will think of us. But if you're worried that you'll lose your friend over a peer pressure situation, you may want to take a closer look at the friendship. A true friend will respect your decisions, and someone who ditches you for not taking orders from them was never a friend to begin with. Also, you may discover that some of your other friends secretly feel the same way you do!  If a friend or classmate tries to pressure you, keep in mind why he or she might be doing it:   * He may be trying to make you feel small, so that he can feel better about himself. You don't need his approval to feel good about yourself. * She may be afraid of anyone who is different from her. You can listen to what she has to say, but that doesn't mean you have to agree with her. * He could be afraid of criticism, so he'll do the criticizing first. It's better to be alone than to be with someone who is rude to you all the time. * Deep down, she may be insecure. * He could be making up rules so that he fits and you don't. Know that there are people who will appreciate you for who you are. Seek them out.   If a simple "No, thanks" won't do the trick, here are some other tactics for turning down someone who offers you a cigarette:   * "I'm allergic to smoke." * "The smell of smoke makes me sick and I don't want to smell like that." * "My parents will ground me if I come home smelling like smoke." * "I know someone who died from smoking and I don't want to do it." * "I don't want to start because I'm trying to get my parents to quit." * "No thanks, I quit."   Whatever you choose, do what feels right for you. Remember: most young people don't smoke, so you're in good company! If someone won't stop pressuring you, it's okay to call for backup. Talk to an adult you trust, like your teacher, guidance counselor, your parents, or an older brother or sister. | |
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| **Smoking: What You Can Do**  Want to spread the word about the dangers of smoking? There's a lot you can do! Here are some ideas to get you started:   * If you'd like to make your own PSA, check with the art and/or film department at your local community college. They may offer a class you can take. If not, check your local bookstore for books about animation. If you've got a story, all you need to learn is how to turn it into a cartoon. * Make your own anti-smoking cartoon by drawing pictures in a "flipbook": each picture goes on one page of a small notebook, so that when you flip through the pages real fast, the pictures move. * To get involved with an anti-smoking campaign in your area, have your parents contact one of the following organizations:   + Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids - (800) 284-KIDS   + American Lung Association - (800) LUNG-USA   + American Cancer Society - (800) ACS-2345 * If you have a loved one who wants to quit smoking, tell them about this Web site for some great tips: **www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit/canquit.htm** * Organize a "Kick Butts Day" event in your area! This annual event, which happens every spring, encourages kids to get involved with the fight against tobacco. For information on how to create your own event, visit **www.kickbuttsday.org**. * Promise that you'll never smoke by signing a pledge stating that you will be tobacco-free. Get family members and people in your community to join you. * Take note of tobacco advertisements posted on store windows in your community. Write letters to those stores or ask your parents to speak to them about the problems caused by the tobacco industry. Maybe they'll take them down and save someone from choosing to smoke. * Contact local businesses and restaurants in your area that allow smoking and ask them to make their establishments smoke-free. * Write opinion pieces in your local paper or school newspaper. * Design your own anti-smoking t-shirt. * Paint posters to encourage kids not to smoke. With your teacher's permission, hang them in classrooms, the school library and the cafeteria. * Ask your school to have an anti-smoking assembly program or volunteer to speak to other students about the facts that you've learned about smoking. * Start an anti-smoking club with other kids at school. * If you see someone selling cigarettes to a person under the age of 18, report it to 1-888-FDA-4KIDS (part of the Food and Drug Administration). * The Smokescreen Action Network has a list of even more things you can do and organizations you can write to in your area. Go to **www.smokefreeair.org** for more information.   Here are some Web sites where you can get extra info about smoking prevention:  **www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tips4youth.htm** Contains links to a ton of information on smoking prevention for kids and teens. Includes facts and ways to get involved in the fight against tobacco.  **Foundation for a Smoke-Free America www.notobacco.org** Information on Foundation for a Smoke-Free America, plus tips and resources for kids and teens.  http://pbskids.org/itsmylife Copyright © 2005 CastleWorks, Inc. All rights reserved. | |