

Smoking . . . talk about it

The most important thing you can do to keep your child from starting to smoke is . . .

talk about it

Tips for talking to youth

1. Don't assume youth will learn to be smoke free at school. By the age of five years, parents should start talking to their children about the importance of remaining a non-smoker.
2. Talk about the damage smoking can do, not just long-term consequences like cancer and heart disease but immediate harm such as shortness of breath and greater risk of colds and asthma.¹
3. Talk about how addictive nicotine is – how it can be as hard to quit as heroin.¹
4. Chances are your child will be offered a cigarette. Try to prepare him or her to say no – before the situation arises, i.e. *no thanks, I like my clothes to smell like my perfume; my boyfriend has a problem with kissing ashtrays, so I'll say no; I'm excited about making the team and I think smoking might slow me down; cancer runs in our family, so I don't want to push my luck, etc.*¹
5. A parent should verbalize his/her disapproval of smoking as youth DO LISTEN and are less likely to smoke than those whose parents say nothing.
6. A parent should tell his/her child how disappointed they would be by him/her smoking.
7. Encourage youth to have friends who DO NOT smoke. If a child's friends do not smoke, the risk that the child will begin smoking is reduced by one-half to two-thirds.¹
8. Be a good role model – if a parent does smoke, ask for the child's help to quit the bad habit. Chances are you've tried to quit at least once before. Tell your child about it – how hard it was to quit and why you finally couldn't. Research clearly indicates that it is the children of parents who smoke, who have the most to gain from this conversation.¹
9. Limit the ability of youth to purchase cigarettes if necessary.
10. Ensure that support from the extended family is in place to keep the youth smoke free.

11. Don't believe smoking is safer than *something else*. Nicotine is as addictive as heroin.
12. It's never too late to intervene – children are flexible. They can change for the right reasons and a parent CAN make the difference.
13. Your first conversation shouldn't be your last. The pressures that contribute to a child's decision to experiment with smoking continue through adolescence and into adulthood. It's important to continue to reinforce your concerns about smoking whenever possible with your child.¹

Tobacco facts

- **Every day** in B.C., another 20 children start smoking. If they don't stop, half of them will die because of it.¹
- A study a few years ago found that children whose parents spoke with them about smoking were much less likely to start. That's especially true if a parent is a smoker. In the study, when parents who smoke talked to their children about tobacco, the chances the child would stay smoke free more than doubled – from 24% to 55%.²
- Although B.C.'s smoking rate has dropped to 15%, the lowest in the country, we still have 5,600 B.C. smokers dying each year.³
- 85% of smokers start before their 16th birthday.³
- Children who make it to the age of 16 without smoking will probably never smoke in their lives.



1 BC Ministry of Health. *Talk about it - tips*

2 Newman, Ian M. Ward, Jolen M., *The Influence of Parental Attitude and Behaviors on Early Adolescent Cigarette Smoking*, Journal of School Health, Vol. 59, No 4, 1989.

3 <http://www.tobaccofacts.org>