

Don't Go Up in Smoke



Smoking—cool? Definitely not. Every day, we see images—on the Internet, in tobacco company advertising, and in the movies—that depict smoking as cool, sexy, professional, and glamorous. What we don't see is that every day 3,000 children become regular smokers. This youthful smoking can have severe lifelong consequences. In addition, teens who smoke are more likely to use illicit drugs and drink more heavily than their non-smoking peers. Don't think that it's just cigarettes that can cause damage to your health—cigars and chewing tobacco also cause cancer.

Smoking can cause bad breath, permanently stained teeth, and early wrinkles—not a big turn-on when you're dating. More importantly, it wrecks your lungs. You can't catch your breath, and when you try to do anything athletic, you feel like you're suffocating. Smoking also blocks oxygen from your bloodstream. Your heart works harder but accomplishes less. You can't move as fast and you're not as strong. Not only does smoking cause many major health risks, it is highly addictive as well.

A Quiz To Light You Up

You have probably heard of the dangers of smoking in health class or from concerned adults or friends. Let's see how much you really know.

True or False?

- Overall, smoking among teenagers has decreased.
False—in recent years, the number of 12th graders who reported smoking daily has increased steadily.
- Females smoke more than males.
False—there is little or no difference in the prevalence of smoking between males and females.
- On the average, smokers do worse in school than non-smokers.
True—a national survey of high school students showed that non-smokers did better in school and went on to college at higher rates than did smokers.
- Cigar and smokeless tobacco—chewing tobacco, dip, spit, or chew—are non-addictive and don't cause cancer.
False—cigars and smokeless tobacco are highly addictive and just as likely to cause cancer as cigarettes.
- As long as you don't smoke, cigarettes can't hurt you.
False—secondhand smoke can kill you. Many people die each year from lung cancer caused by the smoke of others.
- Most adult smokers started smoking in their teens.
True—few smokers start after age 21.
- No one suffers from the side effects of smoking until middle age.
False—aside from bad breath and stained teeth, smoking can hurt your stamina when you are walking, running, or playing sports, and it adds more misery to colds and other respiratory conditions.
- Smoking cigarettes is related to use of other drugs.
True—teenagers using tobacco are far more likely to use drugs like marijuana and cocaine.
- Buying cigarettes is legal if you're 16.
False—selling tobacco to anyone under 18 is illegal.
- Teens who start smoking won't get hooked.
False—nine years after being polled, 75 percent of those teens who said they smoked were still lighting up.
- You don't need that much cash to be a smoker.
False—a person who smokes a pack a day will spend at least \$1,000 over a one-year period to keep up the habit.

Take Action

- Don't start!
- Start a nutrition program in your school to help teens—especially girls—understand that smoking is not a good weight control remedy.
- Refuse to wear tobacco name brands on hats, T-shirts, jackets, and other articles of clothing.
- Start a “smoke-out” week at your school where everyone at school, including teachers and administrators go an entire week without smoking.