

Tobacco Fact Sheet

Since 1964, smoking has killed over 12 million Americans. Currently, about one out of every five deaths in the United States is linked to smoking. Smoking is linked to more preventable diseases and deaths than any other behavior in the country.

The Costs of Smoking

The costs of smoking are high, both in terms of life expectancy and finances. About one out of three smokers who began smoking in their youth die prematurely. Specifically, adults who smoke die about 14 years earlier than adults who do not smoke. For example, in the late 1990s an average of 440,000 Americans died prematurely each year as a result of smoking.

In monetary terms, smoking costs the United States about \$160 billion per year which translates to a cost of \$3,000 per smoker annually.

In addition, smokers use medical services more than nonsmokers and have a lower productivity in the workplace.

Smoking and Disease in Adulthood

Smoking harms almost every organ in the body and has been linked to many diseases including cancer, heart diseases, and lung diseases. Lung cancer is the most deadly form of cancer, and most cases of lung cancer have been linked to smoking. Smokers are 20 times more likely to develop lung cancer than nonsmokers. In addition, 90% of emphysema cases are linked to smoking. Smokers are also 3 times more likely to develop cardiovascular diseases including heart attack, stroke, and high blood pressure.

Smoking harms people of all ages. For example, smoking during pregnancy is related to premature and stillbirth deliveries as well as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome after birth. Additionally, many of the 300,000 low birth weight infants in the United States are born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy.

Children and teens who smoke have more breathing problems, which is detrimental to overall health and physical activity. At any age, smoking damages your lungs. The more cigarettes a person smokes, the faster lung damage occurs. Interestingly, in older adults, smoking is also associated with a greater possibility of hip fractures.

Children and Adolescents and Smoking

Every day, 4,000 children try their first cigarette and about 2,000 people under the age of 18 become regular smokers. Since smoking is more addictive than alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine, addiction to smoking could occur within weeks or even days.

- More than 90% of adult smokers started smoking in their teens.
- One out of five high school students reported smoking their first cigarette before age 13.
- One out of ten eighth graders are smokers, and by the time adolescents leave high school, one in four are regular smokers.
- In the United States, about one out of ten boys and one out of fifty girls in high school use smokeless or spit tobacco.
- Most high school students who use smokeless or spit tobacco started using before ninth grade.
- More than one out of every five children in the United States is exposed to secondhand smoke at home.

Risk Factors for Underage Tobacco Use

Tobacco companies have spent billions of dollars marketing tobacco products to appeal to young people, and research has shown links between tobacco advertising and youth smoking. Teens are also more susceptible to tobacco advertising than adults – they’re more likely to try smoking as a result of advertising. For example, a large portion of middle and high school students own a shirt with a tobacco advertisement on it.

Other risk factors:

- Many girls in middle school think smoking will help them lose weight.
- Teens who have friends and/or family members who smoke are more likely to smoke.
- Young people in families with lower socioeconomic status, which includes factors like income and education, are more likely to use tobacco.
- Lack of parental support and involvement has also been linked to youth tobacco use.
- Behavioral and personality factors of young people such as low academic achievement, low self esteem, lack of negotiation skills, and false beliefs about tobacco have been associated with an increase in tobacco use as well.

Quitting Smoking is Helpful

Quitting smoking has immediate and long-term positive health effects. A few examples from the 2004 Surgeon General’s Report that compares smokers to those who quit smoking include:

- After 5 to 15 years of not smoking, stroke risk is reduced to that of a person who never smoked.
- Coronary heart disease risk is cut by half 1 year after quitting and is nearly the same as someone who never smoked 15 years after quitting.
- Lung cancer risk drops by as much as half 10 years after quitting.

Ideas for Preventing Youth from Using Tobacco

Some methods to reduce teen smoking include: limiting advertising targeting teens, prohibiting tobacco logos on clothing, limiting access to tobacco, halting sponsorship at high-visibility events, and requiring proof of age for purchasing.

What can teachers and school administrators do?

Teachers and administrators can encourage and enforce laws and policies barring students from smoking on campus. Since teachers and administrators act as role models for students, they should refrain from smoking on school grounds. Students should also be taught about the short-term and long-term detrimental effects of tobacco. Schools can also encourage participation in support groups for students who are trying to quit smoking. Additionally, mentoring programs can be set up at school to encourage positive behaviors and deter negative tobacco-related behaviors.

What can parents do?

If parents are smokers, they can strive to be a model for their children and attempt to quit. If parents continue to smoke, they should try not to smoke around their children. This helps children avoid secondhand smoke and helps keep them from learning smoking behavior from their parents. If parents find out their child is smoking, they should encourage the child to quit and help him or her connect with resources to help quit.

Many adult smokers began smoking as children or adolescents, so it is very important for parents to be vigilant in protecting their children and adolescents from starting to smoke.

Resources

Tailors health information to parents, teens, and children: www.KidsHealth.org

The campaign for tobacco free kids: <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/>

Tobacco information and prevention sources: <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/>

The U.S. Surgeon General's reports on tobacco: <http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/index.htm>

Tobacco facts from British Columbia: <http://www.tobaccofacts.org/>

The timeline and history of tobacco: http://www.tobacco.org/History/Tobacco_History.html

International facts about tobacco: http://www.who.int/tobacco/statistics/tobacco_atlas/en/

Guides to quitting smoking: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/tobacco/>