

TEN THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO PREVENT THEIR CHILDREN FROM SMOKING



- 1. Be a role model.** If you don't smoke, that sets a strong example for your children. Research shows that children of parents who smoke are more likely to smoke themselves.^{1,2}
- 2. Designate your house as a smoke-free zone.** If you are a smoker or have friends or relatives who smoke, avoid exposing your children to smoke. It is estimated that secondhand smoke exposure causes approximately 3,400 lung cancer deaths and 22,700–69,600 heart disease deaths annually among adult nonsmokers in the United States.³ Young children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at a higher risk of developing asthma, ear infections and cavities.^{4,5} Infants are at a higher risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).² The effects of secondhand smoke are serious and should not be minimized.
- 3. Keep trying to quit.** If you are a smoker who's tried to quit, you're not alone. Seventy percent (70%) of smokers report wanting to quit, but only about five percent of those who try are successful in the long term.⁶ Try to quit for your health and for the health of your children. Enlist your family's support in your cessation efforts and their support will help you quit. When they realize how difficult it is for you to quit, it might influence them to never start. To get the help you need to re-learn your life without cigarettes, visit www.BecomeAnEX.org.
- 4. Don't smoke around your children, even in the car.** 77.6% of US households prohibit smoking anywhere inside of the family vehicle.⁷ Joining in this practice by making your car a smoke-free zone will protect your passengers, including your children, from the harms of secondhand smoke.
- 5. Educate Your Children To Be Savvy Consumers of Media.** The tobacco industry spent \$12.49 billion in 2006 in the United States marketing their products and its widespread campaigns glamorize tobacco use. Be careful that these messages don't influence your kids. One way to do this would be to reduce your children's exposure to smoking in movies. A recent federal government report concluded that smoking in movies causes youth to start smoking, and we know that smoking in youth-rated movies account for nearly 200,000 new youth smokers each year. The motion picture ratings system only alerts parents to smoking content some of the time, so be on the look out for movies that contain smoking on www.scenesmoking.org.
- 6. Inform your children about the health risks associated with smoking.** This is for both adults and kids. Smoking will impact their ability to play sports successfully and may have potentially long-term negative effects on their good health and their appearance. In addition to the way it smells, smoking causes premature facial aging and stained teeth.^{10,11}

7. **Know your children's friends.** Peer pressure is a powerful factor in children choosing to smoke, drink alcohol and take drugs. Find out if they have friends who smoke. Encourage them to be role models for their siblings and friends by making informed choices not to smoke and set an example with their peers that could set a trend. Teach children that it is okay to go against the group when their health and safety is at risk. In fact, if they have taken a stand, based on an informed position, it is likely that their friends will respect them for it and follow suit.
8. **Listen carefully to your children and be a sounding board for them.** When parents create an atmosphere in their home that encourages discussion and debate about controversial topics that all teens confront and must learn to deal with, empowering your child with the facts will help them stay smoke-free. Start the dialogue about tobacco at an early age (5 and 6) and continue to provide them with age-appropriate information on smoking as they grow older.
9. **Build skills early on.** By practicing decision-making early in life, your child will later be able to make smart choices when it comes to more important things like smoking.
10. **If they start to smoke, encourage them in an attempt to quit.** By quitting, people can add years to their lives.¹² Quitting is a life-saving decision that can impact the lives of everyone you love. It isn't easy, but every quit attempt should be considered a success. For help on ways to quit, visit www.BecomeAnEX.org.

SOURCES

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