Tobacco and Alcohol Prevention

For the classroom teacher:

Tobacco and tobacco use

The American Lung Association has found that 85% of adult smokers started smoking regularly at age 21 or younger – 68% started at age 18 or younger – while they were still in school! Kids spend nearly one-third of their waking hours in school. This means schools are in a powerful position to help prevent tobacco use by educating youth about the many risks of tobacco.

In fact, nearly all first use of tobacco takes place before high school graduation. In 2009, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that more than 5% of the middle school students surveyed had smoked cigarettes, and 4% had smoked cigars. About 3% had used spit or other smokeless tobacco. That same year, more than 1 out of 4 high school teens were found to be current tobacco users. This makes the middle school years a key time to start talking about tobacco.

The earlier kids first try smoking, the higher their chance of becoming a regular adult smoker and the harder it is for them to quit. Kids who regularly use tobacco have the same kind of addiction to nicotine as adult smokers. They also have many of the same health problems, and many of the same difficulties in quitting. In the face of aggressive and widespread tobacco marketing, it is important for kids to know the dangers of using tobacco.

Did you know?

• Each day, nearly 4,000 kids under the age of 18 try their first cigarette and another 1,000 become regular, daily smokers. About one-third of these kids will die prematurely from a smoking-related disease.

• Cigarette smoking causes significant health problems among kids, including tooth decay, gum disease, coughing spells, shortness of breath, wheezing or gasping, increased production of phlegm, respiratory illnesses, reduced physical fitness, and reduced lung growth and function. Smoking is also associated with hearing loss, vision problems, pre-cancerous gene mutations, chronic lung disease, and blood vessel disease, which can lead to heart attacks or strokes at a young age.

• Cigarette smokers are also more likely to get into fights, carry weapons, attempt suicide, suffer from mental health problems such as depression, and engage in high-risk sexual behaviors.

• There are many health risks linked to spit tobacco, too, including stained teeth, bad breath, gum problems, tooth loss, cancer, and nicotine addiction. In fact, research has shown that teens who use spit or other smokeless tobacco are more likely to become cigarette smokers than non-users. Smokeless tobacco use is also strongly linked with illegal drug and alcohol use.

Tobacco facts

• Each year in the US, smoking results in about 160,000 deaths due to lung cancer. Of these, about 3,400 are non-smokers, as a result of exposure to secondhand smoke.

• Smoking accounts for about $193 billion in health care expenditures and productivity losses each year.

• Cigarettes are the tobacco product most often used by American youth, but cigars, smokeless tobacco products, and hookahs (tobacco waterpipes) are growing in popularity.

• Even as early as 8th grade, 1 in 5 students have tried cigarettes, and 1 in 14 (7%) have already become a regular smoker.
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The 2010 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)\textsuperscript{10} data revealed that:

- Nationwide, more than 46% of students had tried cigarette smoking.
- 11% of students reported current use of at least 1 cigarette a day.
- 9% of students reported current use of chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip.
- 26% of students reported current use of some form of tobacco (cigarettes, cigars, or smokeless tobacco).

**Smoking and academic performance**

The health and behavior problems linked to tobacco use are associated with absenteeism, suspension, and expulsion – all of which are linked with lower academic performance. Studies have shown that smokers are more likely to miss school than non-smokers, and absenteeism is linked with lower grades.

Keeping students healthy, in school, and ready to learn is the responsibility of parents, educators, and the medical community. Most importantly, it is the responsibility of the students themselves. Schools can play a vital role by offering classroom health education, as well as opportunities for students to practice health-enhancing skills and behaviors during the school day.

**Alcohol and alcohol use**

Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among US youth – more than tobacco or illegal drugs.\textsuperscript{11}

Despite declining rates, nearly 3 out of 4 students (71%) have consumed alcohol (more than just a few sips) by the end of high school. More than 1 out of 3 (36%) have done so by 8th grade. One out of 6 8th graders report having been drunk at least once in their life.\textsuperscript{9}

Alcohol use is widespread among US youth and a major public health problem. Although drinking alcohol when you are under than the age of 21 is illegal in all states, underage youth find it relatively easy to get alcohol, often from adults. In fact, people 12 to 20 years of age drink 11% of all alcohol consumed in the United States.\textsuperscript{13} Students and parents need to be aware of the dangers of alcohol, and schools are in a powerful position to educate families about the many risks of alcohol use at any age.

**Did you know?**

- Drinking among youth has been linked to accidental injuries, car crashes, physical fights, higher school absenteeism rates, academic underachievement, higher suicide risk, and illegal behavior.\textsuperscript{11,13}
- Each year, an estimated 5,000 people under the age of 21 die from alcohol-related injuries.\textsuperscript{12}
- Kids who begin drinking before age 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol dependence or abuse alcohol later in life than those who start drinking at or after age 21.\textsuperscript{13}
- More than 90% of the alcohol consumed by kids is in the form of binge drinks (having 5 or more drinks in a row).\textsuperscript{13} Binge drinking is a huge public health concern – it can cause alcohol poisoning, which can lead to coma and even death.
- Long-term alcohol misuse increases the risks of liver disease, many types of cancer, and heart disease, as well as depression, anxiety, and antisocial personality disorder.\textsuperscript{11}
- In addition to cancer, long-term effects of alcohol use in kids includes memory loss, disruption of normal growth and sexual development, and changes in brain development.\textsuperscript{13}

RelayFieldDay.org / 1.800.227.2345 / cancer.org
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Resources

2 Source: CDC, Tobacco Use Among Middle and High School Students — United States, 2000—2009; www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5933a2.htm
3 Source: USDHHS, Results from the 2010 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings; www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k10Results/Html/2k10Results.htm#5.10
11 Source: CDC, Healthy Youth! Alcohol & Drug Use; www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/alcoholdrug/index.htm
12 Source: NIAAA, Underage Drinking Research Initiative; www.niaaa.nih.gov/AboutNIAAA/NIAASSponsoredPrograms/Pages/underage.aspx#statistics
13 Source: CDC, Alcohol and Public Health Facts Sheets; www.cdc.gov/alcohol/facts-sheets/underage-drinking.htm
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Tobacco and alcohol

Before beginning any of these activities, review the statistics from the previous sections with your students. These facts should get your students thinking about the dangers of using tobacco before going on to the awareness activities. Because middle school students are beginning to become aware of alcohol and its effects, we are combining some alcohol awareness activities with the tobacco awareness activities.

**Option 1:** Here is a math project: Using this statistic from above, “4,000 students try a cigarette every day, 1,000 of them become regular smokers, and 1 out of 3 of those will die early from smoking-related diseases,” have the students calculate how many of their classmates will

- Try a cigarette
- Become a smoker
- Eventually die from smoking

This will really put into perspective the number of kids just like them who are affected by tobacco use.

**Option 2:** Have students make their own anti-tobacco or anti-alcohol ad or commercial. If they make posters, place them around the school to show other classes the risks involved in tobacco use or drinking alcohol.

**Option 3:** Gather pictures of a smoker and non-smoker’s lungs and a drinker and non-drinker’s liver. Then have the children compare the differences, and write down the reasons they would not want to smoke or drink.
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Tobacco-free classroom activity ideas

• Find out the cost of a pack of cigarettes in your area.
  - Ask students to figure out what it would cost if they smoked a pack of cigarettes every day for a week, a month, a year, and 5 years, and a lifetime.
  - Ask students to create a list of the things that they could buy or do with the same money if they didn’t smoke.
• Discuss the social and societal implications of choosing to smoke. Make 3 lists on the chalkboard, and have students consider the immediate, short-term, and long-term implications of choosing to smoke.
• Discuss the “cost” of cigarettes. Have students consider:
  - The actual price of the pack of cigarettes
  - The “cost” to the individual smoker’s health
  - The “cost” that the smoker’s family “pays”
  - The “cost” of smoking-related illness
  - The “cost” of an early death due to lung cancer
  - The “cost” of a fire caused by a burning cigarette

Alcohol-free classroom activity idea

• Find out the cost of a 6 pack, 12 pack, 24 pack of beer in your area.
  - Ask students to figure out what it would cost if they were regularly buying alcohol and having 2 drinks every day. What if they drank a 6 pack every Friday and Saturday night?
  - Ask students to create a list of the things that they could buy or do with the same money if they didn’t drink.
• Find out what the local penalties are for underage drinking.
  - Ask students to figure out all the “costs” associated with underage drinking:
    ▪ Fines that they might have to pay if caught
    ▪ Other penalties they might face if caught drinking underage (such as suspension from school, juvenile record, community service, or even jail time)
    ▪ Fines and other penalties imposed on adults caught buying or supplying alcohol for minors
• Discuss the social and societal implications of choosing to drink. Make 3 lists on the chalkboard, and have students consider the immediate, short-term, and long-term implications of alcohol use.
• Discuss the “cost” of alcohol. Have students consider:
  - The actual price of alcohol
  - The “cost” to the individual’s health
  - The “cost” that the individual’s family “pays”
  - The “cost” of alcohol-related illness
  - The “cost” of an early death due to alcohol-related illnesses
  - The “cost” of an alcohol-related death such as a car accident or alcohol poisoning
What are cigarettes, and what do they do to my body?
Classroom discussion and activity

Objective: To learn how smoking harms your body

Materials: Plastic straws
Chalkboard/flip chart

Activity:
Pass out the straws, and have the children blow through them to simulate having emphysema. At first it is easy to breathe, but after a minute, your lungs will have trouble keeping up. Ask students what it would be like to breathe like this the rest of their lives. (10 minutes)

Ask students to brainstorm for a minute and then have them share everything they know about cigarettes. If they have trouble, here are some questions you can ask to get them started:

What is a cigarette?
What does smoking do to your body?
Can smoking hurt your body even if you’re not smoking?

This should give you a good idea about what they know and what you need to cover. (10 minutes)

Explain what smoking does to the body. Talk about the dangers of secondhand smoke. Don’t forget to discuss smokeless or spit tobacco, too. Tell them how these things affect the skin, teeth, lungs, liver, and heart.

For more information, please visit:
• www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/QuestionsaboutSmokingTobaccoandHealth/index
• www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/tobacco-related-cancer-fact-sheet
• www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/CigaretteSmoking/index
• www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/secondhand-smoke
• www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/SmokelessTobaccoandHowtoQuit/index
• www.cancer.org/Cancer/CancerCauses/TobaccoCancer/ChildandTeenTobaccoUse/index
What are you really putting in your body when you smoke a cigarette?

There are more than 7,000 different chemicals in cigarette tobacco and tobacco smoke. Among these are more than 60 chemicals that are known to cause cancer. (Things known to cause cancer are called carcinogens.) Although some of these ingredients and chemicals are safe when they are used in foods, some turn into carcinogens when they are heated or burned. Here is the American Lung Association’s short list of some of the ingredients found in cigarettes today:

- Acetone – nail polish remover
- Acetic acid – used in hair dye
- Ammonia – household cleaner
- Arsenic – used in rat poisons
- Benzene – used in making dyes, synthetic rubber
- Butane – gas; used in lighter fluid
- Cadmium – used in batteries
- Carbon monoxide – a poisonous gas released in car exhaust
- Formaldehyde – used to preserve dead tissue
- Hexamine – found in barbecue lighter fluid
- Lead – in batteries, poisonous in high doses
- Methanol – a main component in rocket fuel
- Naphthalene – ingredient in mothballs
- Nicotine – a poison used to kill bugs
- Tar – material for paving roads
- Toluene – used to make paint

You decide ... do you want to put these things into your body? What could happen?
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Selling tobacco

Tobacco sales to youth
All states have laws that make it illegal to sell cigarettes to anyone under the age of 18. Yet in 2009, 14% of students under the age of 18 who currently smoked cigarettes reported they usually bought their own cigarettes in a store or gas station.¹

How does this happen?

What could be done to prevent it?

Tobacco marketing
Cigarette companies spend billions of dollars each year to promote their products. Since children and teenagers make up the largest number of new smokers, the industry's advertising and promotion campaigns are often designed to have special appeal to young people.

What do cigarette companies do to attract young people to smoking?

Unfortunately, tobacco marketing works. Most young smokers choose one of the more heavily advertised brands.

Can you name 3 brands of cigarettes? Why do you know what they are?

Why do cigarette companies need to spend so much money to attract young people to smoke?

Resources:
¹ Source: CDC, Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance — United States, 2009; www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5905a1.htm?s_cid=ss5905a1_e
Relay Field Day activities

I kicked butt

Make a giant cigarette, and hang it up at your Relay Field Day event. Encourage the students to sign a pledge stating they will live a smoke-free life, and then let them kick the hanging cigarette. Each student who kicks the cigarette and takes the pledge can be given an “I Kicked Butt” sticker, which are available through your American Cancer Society staff partner.

Making the cigarette kicking bag:

- 12-inch-by-24-inch piece of sturdy tan fabric (filter portion of the cigarette)
- 36-inch-by-24-inch piece of white fabric (cigarette section)
- 5-inch-by-24-inch gray fabric (ash portion of the cigarette)
- Fiber-fill stuffing or crumpled paper
- 1 24-inch (circumference) circle of white fabric
- 1 24-inch (circumference) circle of gray fabric

1. Stitch the tan piece of fabric to the white fabric along the 24-inch section.
2. Stitch the gray piece of fabric to the opposite side end of the cigarette along the 24-inch section.
3. Fold in half along the longest edge, and stitch all the way up.
4. Use the white circle to sew on the top of the cigarette at the filter portion of the cigarette.
5. Stuff the cigarette with the fiber fill or paper.
6. Attach the gray circle.

Your cigarette is now ready to be kicked!

Creating the pledge wall:

Using butcher paper, create a large pledge sheet that states:

*I know that smoking is unhealthy for my body and the people around me so I pledge to live a smoke-free life.*

Encourage students (and parents and staff) to sign the pledge sheet.

Other ideas

Encourage teams to develop their own anti-smoking/anti-tobacco advertising campaign. Hold a competition, and showcase the top advertising campaigns during the event.

Have kids create posters with the before and after effects of smoking on facial appearance.

Simulate the impact of cigarette smoke on lungs by providing a demonstration. Visit quit.org.au/downloads/schools/Tar_Extractor.pdf for detailed instructions on an experiment showing the amount of smoke in an inhale and exhale.

Knock down cigarettes in a bowling tournament. Make bowling pins that look like cigarettes, and knock them down with a bowling ball. Some have used frozen turkeys as the “ball” to indicate that you can quit cold turkey!
For parents: Help your child stay tobacco-free

Parents’ attitudes and values influence those of their children, including their opinions about smoking and their behavior related to tobacco use. Remember that despite the impact of movies, music, and peers, parents can be the greatest influence in their kids’ lives.

Parents can take the following actions to help ensure that their children remain (or become) tobacco free:

• Talk to your kids about the risks of tobacco use. Studies have shown that this works! If loved ones suffer with or died from tobacco-related illnesses, let your kids know. Let them know, for instance, that tobacco use strains the heart, damages the lungs, and can cause a lot of other problems, including cancer. Also mention what it can do to the way a person looks and smells: smoking makes hair and clothes stink, causes bad breath, and stains teeth and fingernails. Spit and smokeless tobacco cause bad breath, stained teeth, tooth decay, tooth loss, and bone loss in the jaw.

• The children of parents who smoke are much more likely to smoke themselves. But if you use tobacco, you can still make a difference. Your best move, of course, is to try to quit. Meanwhile, don’t use tobacco around your children, don’t offer it to them, and don’t leave it where they can easily get it.

• Start talking about tobacco use when your children are 5 or 6 years old, and continue through their high school years. Many kids start using tobacco by age 11. And many are addicted by age 14.

• Know if your kids’ friends use tobacco. Talk about ways to say “no” to tobacco.

• Talk to your kids about the false glamorization of tobacco in the media, such as ads, movies, and magazines.

If you use tobacco yourself and don’t want your children to start, know that you can still influence their decisions. You may even have more power, because you’ve been there. You can speak to your child firsthand about:

• How you got started and what you thought about it at the time
• How hard it is to quit
• How it has affected your health
• What it costs you, financially and socially

Here are some more things that you can do to address the additional factors that influence kids to use tobacco:

• Explain to your kids that tobacco ads and the images in them are designed to influence people to associate tobacco use with glamour, beauty, and popularity.
• Ensure that your kids’ school environments and campuses are tobacco-free.
• Encourage tobacco prevention training for teachers, and work to ensure that all middle schools have tobacco-prevention education programs and that this education is reinforced in high school.
• Support local and state tobacco-prevention and restriction efforts by being aware of regulations and laws in place. Support stronger laws and restrictions on tobacco use.
• Support local, state, and federal programs to prevent and reduce tobacco use among kids and to ensure that adults have access to the help they may need to quit.