



Tobacco kills more Americans each year than alcohol, cocaine, crack, heroin, car accidents, murders, suicide, fires, and AIDS combined.

Think everyone's smoking? Guess what? Only 2 out of 10 teens smoke. It's a myth that "everyone is smoking." They're not.

And that's a good thing. Smoking makes your face and fingers yellow and leathery, your hair and breath smell bad, and your teeth yellow or even brown. Not to mention causing disease and early death.

Nicotine is dangerous and addictive

This means that once you start using it, your body starts to need it. Nicotine changes your brain chemistry. So, eventually, your brain won't function normally without it. Here are some other facts to make you think twice about smoking:

- Cigarettes make you weak by starving your body of oxygen. Smoking coats your lungs with tar and kills the air sacs that help you breathe.
- Cigarettes contain things like arsenic (in rat poison), acetone (in nail polish remover), and formaldehyde (used to preserve dead bodies), and nearly 4,000 other chemicals—things that you would never want to put in your body.
- Even cigarettes called "natural" or "additive free" contain many of the same chemicals that are found in regular cigarettes. Cigars, cloves, and bidis do the same things to your body as cigarettes.

Why do I smoke?

Ask yourself why you started smoking in the first place. Some people start because people around them smoke, or because they want to fit in. Others are just curious. Whatever the reason, 70 percent of smokers between 12 and 17 years old wish they had never started smoking. And remember, smoking kills more than 400,000 people each year in the United States.

The tobacco companies try to trick you into thinking that if you smoke you will be cool and sexy like the people in their ads. They will say anything to get you addicted to nicotine, even if it costs you your life. That's how they stay in business. Through TV, movies, and magazines they try to make smoking look sexy, beautiful, and powerful. But what they show

you isn't real. They don't show you the stained teeth and wrinkles that really come with smoking. Ask yourself if giving the tobacco companies your money is really worth the risks.

Why should I quit?

After quitting, you will notice changes right away. For starters, you will:

- breathe better
- smell better
- feel better
- look better
- notice that food tastes better
- get fewer colds
- save money
- have more energy

Quitting helps you save cash!

Smoking costs a lot of money. If you smoke a pack a day, you are spending about \$120 per month. In a year, you could save \$1,400 if you quit. Think about all you could do with that money:

- Buy a stereo or a flat screen TV and DVD player.
- Buy a top of the line computer.
- Buy 65 CDs.
- Get season tickets to your local sports team.
- See 117 movies.
- Join a gym.
- Buy a phone and unlimited minutes.
- Buy a mountain bike.
- See 33 concerts.
- Put a down payment on a car.

What else could you do with \$1,400?

So, how do I quit?

First, set a date to quit on your calendar. Then, in order to get ready to quit:

- Ask for support from your family and friends or find someone to quit with you.
- Keep track of your smoking. Keep a journal and write down when, where, and why you smoke each cigarette. Doing this can help you understand how smoking fits into your life and how you can replace it with healthy activities when you quit.
- Try going without a cigarette. Don't smoke when you first get a craving. Distract yourself or talk to a friend. Most cravings go away within 10 minutes, so work on getting through that time without a smoke.
- Pick blocks of time during the day when you won't smoke. (For example, tell yourself "I won't smoke after 3 p.m.") This helps you practice being a non-smoker.
- Talk to your doctor or nurse about how Kaiser Permanente can help. Or ask your school counselor about programs for teens.
- Call the California Smokers' Helpline (1-800-NO-BUTTS) for free, confidential help any time.

How can I stick to it?

After you quit, try to keep very busy for the first few days. Find smoke free activities, like going to a movie or the mall. Or try these:

- Stock up on sugarless gum and water. This can be especially helpful if you're going to be around smokers.

- Don't let a single "slip-up" ruin your plans. Forgive yourself and think about why you smoked so that you can deal with that situation differently in the future.
- Know that the worst will be over in just a few days, but physical withdrawal symptoms can last a few weeks.
- Get rid of lighters, ashtrays, and all of your cigarettes.
- Instead of thinking about never smoking again, focus on getting through today without smoking. Take it one day at a time.
- Keep your hands and mouth busy. Text message. Play with a pencil or paper clip.
- Keep low calorie snacks on hand, like air-popped popcorn, baby carrots, or fruit.
- Be physically active. This can reduce stress and help you feel better as you stop smoking.
- Drink lots of fluids, like water, to flush the nicotine out of your system.
- Avoid difficult situations while you are trying to quit, like going to a party where you know everyone will be smoking. If you can't, focus on your goal of being a non-smoker. Plan fun things to do and try to minimize stress.
- Plan what you'll say when your friends offer you a smoke: "No, thanks. I quit and want to stay with my goal."
- Reward yourself whenever you achieve a goal you set for yourself. Treat yourself to something that you really want.

People like you *do* quit

People who want to quit smoking really can quit. In the U.S., half of all people who ever smoked no longer smoke. Quitting can be hard for people who are addicted, especially if they've been smoking for a long time. It's easier to quit now, while you're still young. Quitting is a challenge, but you can do it!

More resources

Web sites

- kp.org/quitsmoking
- quitnet.com
- thetruth.com
- bigtobaccosucks.org
- kidshealth.org
- teenwire.com

Book

- *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*

Phone line

- CA Smoker's Helpline
1-800-NO BUTTS

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.