



# Prevent Youth From Becoming Smokers

## About Teenage Smoking

It's more important than ever to prevent kids from starting tobacco use. Smoking can harm kids well before they reach adulthood by causing a number of immediate, sometimes irreversible, health risks and problems

- Smoking causes a wide range of serious health problems – including persistent coughs, respiratory problems and frequent infections. Long term health problems include lung cancer, heart disease, strokes, and frequently results in premature disability and death.
- Kids can become seriously addicted to smoking very quickly, just a few weeks or even days after first 'experimenting' with cigarettes.
- Overall, nearly 80% of all adult smokers became regular smokers before the age of 18 and 90% do so before leaving their teenage years.

## What Parents Can Do

What parents say, how they act, and the values they communicate through their words and deeds has an enormous influence on whether their children use tobacco.

- **If you don't smoke, don't start! If you do smoke, quit.** Research shows that children who have a parent who smokes are more likely to smoke and to be heavier smokers at young ages. Parents are modeling a positive behavior by not starting or by quitting.
- **Maintain a smoke-free home** by not allowing anyone to smoke inside. This makes smoking less convenient for their kids and sends a strong message that smoking is undesirable.
- **Talk to your kids** about the immediate effects of smoking on physical appearance and their health.
- **Remind your kids – not everyone smokes!** Many kids overestimate the amount of smoking among their peers.

## Resources to Help

- Cook County Department of Public Health  
708-633-8654  
[www.cookcountypublichealth.org](http://www.cookcountypublichealth.org)  
\*Local resources for cessation and tobacco prevention
- Illinois Tobacco Quitline  
1-866-784-8937  
\*Free telephone cessation counseling
- Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids  
[www.tobaccofreekids.org](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org)  
\*Fact sheets, statistics, and ways to get involved to protect youth from tobacco initiation.

Source: *How Parents Can Protect Their Kids From Becoming Addicted Smokers, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, September 25, 2009 / Meg Riordan*

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**Cook County Department  
of Public Health**  
Promoting health. Preventing disease.  
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