



Talk with your
children about
smoking.



It is never too early to start talking about smoking. You can be the greatest influence in your children's lives and help them make the decision to not smoke.

Children learn by example. If you smoke, think about what this tells your children. Think about how to explain your addiction to your children. This may be a lesson they will always remember.

If other important people in your children's lives smoke, discuss this with your children and listen to what they think about these experiences.

Listen to what they think about health and smoking

Smoking can cause immediate harm, like shortness of breath and lack of endurance. Smokers are sick more often with colds, coughs or asthma. In the long run, smoking can cause heart and lung disease and cancer (risk of mouth cancer is much greater in smokers or those who use smokeless chewing tobacco). Every 13 seconds someone in the world dies because they were a smoker. Smoking kills about 1,650 Nova Scotians every year. Smoking can shorten the length of your life.

Ask about who imitates young smokers

Ask your children what they want to teach their younger friends or younger brothers or sisters about smoking. How would they feel about being a model for them? How would they protect them from becoming addicted to cigarettes? Most young people do not smoke — about three-quarters of young people in Nova Scotia do not smoke. Non-smokers are always in the majority of all age groups.

Listen to what they think about advertising or paid product placement in movies

Ask if they notice advertising about smoking in magazines or product placement on television or in movies. Ask your children what the tobacco company really has in mind. Ask them if they were a tobacco company executive, how they would sell cigarettes to kids? How do your children feel about tobacco companies targeting youth?

Ask your children about the way smokers look and smell

Most young people think smoking is gross. Ask them what they think about the bad breath, smelly clothes and hair, and the stained fingers that smoking causes. Ask them about the signs of smoking that show up in a smoker's mouth: the plaque and tartar that build up more quickly on teeth, and the much greater chances of developing gum disease and losing teeth. Smoking even affects the way food tastes.

Talk about chemicals in smoke

Smokers inhale more than 5,000 chemicals when they smoke. These include acetone (paint stripper), carbon monoxide (car exhaust), phenol (disinfectants), cadmium (car batteries), toluene (paint thinner) and benzene (gasoline). Fifty of these chemicals cause cancer.

Listen to what they think about addiction

People who smoke are not bad; they're addicted to a very powerful substance – nicotine. Many became addicted when they were kids and didn't believe they would get hooked on tobacco. Nicotine can be as addictive as heroin or cocaine.

Talk about money and smoking

Figure out with them how much smoking might cost for one week or one year. How would they feel about giving all of that money to tobacco companies? What would they rather do with it?

Talk about physical activity

Children who are active in sport have a far lower chance of becoming smokers and are unlikely to pick up the habit once they have reached the age of 18. Support your children becoming more physically active through sport. More than 80 per cent of Canadians between the ages of 10 and 24 who are active do not smoke. To learn more about sport options in your area, visit Sport Nova Scotia's website www.sportnovascotia.ca or call 902-425-5450.

Help your children say "no"

Help your kids stay part of the 75 per cent of Nova Scotia's youth who do not smoke. Discuss how they would say no to cigarettes and listen to what they say. Ask what they think of the following suggestions when they are offered a cigarette:

- "No thanks. I don't smoke."
- Explain why you can't smoke. "My coach doesn't want me to smoke" or "I have asthma, so I can't."
- Be creative. Totally change the focus of the conversation - change the topic, ask an unrelated question, give a compliment.
- Leave the smokers. Find another place to go or go home.
- Don't leave mad. Say, "I can't stay now, but why don't we meet later."
- Make a plan beforehand about not smoking with friends. Decide what you will do and stick to it.

Remind your children that most young people do not smoke and learning to say "no" now is a lot easier than trying to quit later.

Ask them how they feel about their smoking

You cannot make your children stop smoking. But you can explain your concern and show you care. Say that you will help them if they want to try to quit. One of the best approaches is to ask your children how they feel about their smoking and how you could help. Listen to what they say.

Nagging or preaching will not help

Let your children know you respect them and love them for who they are and that you will support them when they try to quit.

This does not mean you have to make smoking easier for your children. Keep your house smoke free if possible. Do not buy tobacco for your children and do not give them money to buy cigarettes.

Things you should know about quitting

- Half of the people who were smokers have quit.
- Most people do not quit overnight. They have to think about it for a while first.
- Most people try to quit on their own without help or medication, even though help and medication are very effective. Your doctor can help.
- Most people have to quit four or five times before they learn how to succeed.
- Some smokers experience withdrawal symptoms such as: headaches, sleeping difficulties, tiredness, grouchiness and difficulty concentrating. These symptoms will not last more than a week or two.

The following support is helpful to smokers trying to quit

- Listen.
- Appreciate that giving up cigarettes is difficult.
- Say how glad you are they are trying to stop.
- Praise and reward efforts.
- Show confidence that the smoker will be able to cope effectively.
- Don't give up on them.

Make your home smoke free

Think about protecting your family from cigarette smoke. Limit smoking to outside the house (on the deck or balcony, in the garage, or in the yard). Ask other smokers in your home to help protect your family and smoke outside.

Take a stand in your community

Tell local businesses that you do not like to see them sell tobacco to kids. Report businesses that often sell tobacco to minors under 19, by calling the provincial Tobacco Control Unit at 902-424-5187. Ask your MLA for 100 per cent smoke-free indoor public places in Nova Scotia. Support smoking prevention programs and policies at your children's school.

Resources

Make sure your children know where to get help and information.

www.doctorsNS.com
(resource materials and links to other organizations)

www.cda-adc.ca
(look under "Your oral health")

www.sportnovascotia.ca

www.quitnet.org

www.quit4life.com (youth)

www.ns.lung.ca/quit4good.html

www.gov.ns.ca/ohp/tcu/

Smokers' Helpline
(Canadian Cancer Society)
1-877-513-5333



5 Spectacle Lake Drive
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia B3B 1X7
tel. 902.468.1866 fax. 902.468.6578
www.doctorsNS.com