

RAISING KIDS WHO DON'T SMOKE

# Peer pressure & smoking



Talk to your kids  
about not smoking  
They'll Listen



## What's inside

Peer pressure can be a good influence—or a negative one—on your child’s behavior, including whether to engage in risky behaviors like smoking. Whether your kids are in elementary school or high school, it’s not too early or too late to talk to them about peer pressure and not smoking. The information on these pages will help you start and continue these important conversations.

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# You CAN make a difference

**A**t the high school I attended in the 1960s, 12th graders could relax in the “Senior Lounge.” It was the only place in the school where students could smoke, and it reeked of tobacco. Some of the seniors who went there started the habit because their friends did it, and because they saw smoking as a sign of maturity.

I stayed away from the lounge and its smoke. My mother, a lifelong smoker, was dying of cancer that was probably caused by her addiction.

That lounge is long gone. We know much more about the dangers of smoking. But the peer pressure that led some of my classmates to start smoking is still there. Teenagers increasingly look to their friends for feedback on how they’re coming across and what they might change. I see this in my son and remember it from my own adolescence.

**“Peer pressure is one reason why adolescents are at much greater risk than adults for starting to smoke. It’s also why it’s so important for parents to take an active and repeated stand against smoking.”**

Peer pressure is one reason why adolescents are at much greater risk than adults for starting to smoke. It’s also why it’s so important for parents to take an active and repeated stand against smoking.

Parents know their children best. But sometimes we all need some guidance on when and how to talk about tough topics. That’s where this brochure can help.

It was created in consultation with an advisory board of respected psychologists, psychiatrists and public health professionals who are deeply committed to preventing children from smoking.

Remember that while peer pressure is powerful, in the long run you will have much more influence on the choices your children make.

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—Lawrence Kutner, Ph.D.

# Youth smoking and peer pressure: the connection

Peer pressure. We've all experienced it. And when it comes to youth smoking, the connection is clear—research shows that the influence of peers is the most important factor in determining when and how cigarettes are first tried.<sup>1</sup>

Kids today feel social pressure in countless ways, from clothing and music choices to risky areas such as drugs, sex and smoking. The intensity of peer pressure varies from situation to situation. Adolescents experience it when friends or others they admire pressure them to do something they don't want to do, or when they feel they have to do something to fit in.

Kids say peer pressure makes them feel they're being pulled in two directions. They may not want to do what they're feeling pressured to do, but they're also afraid of losing their friends if they say no. Kids worry about being on people's bad sides and really want to avoid feeling like outsiders.

During adolescence, kids assert their independence and explore their identity. Yet they still crave the approval of their peers and worry,



**"My friends gave me a hard time for a few minutes but then they stopped."**

*Shaun, Wisconsin*

often unnecessarily, about being rejected. Dr. Jacqueline Lerner, a professor of psychology at Boston College, says, "Adolescents behave in

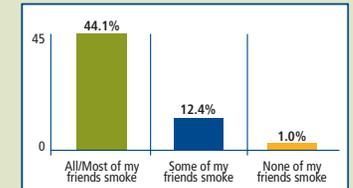
accordance with their perceptions—which do not always match reality." You can help them accurately perceive the world by sharing your experiences and a more factual perspective on reality. Your words *do* make a difference, even if it seems your kids aren't paying attention.

## The Effects of Peer Pressure

When it comes to smoking cigarettes, kids are clearly influenced by what their friends do. In fact, one study has found that if your child's friends smoke cigarettes, she is nine times more likely to try smoking than if her friends are non-smokers.<sup>2</sup>

## How Friends Affect Youth Smoking

Percentage of 11–17-year-olds who smoked a cigarette at least once in the past 30 days.



Source: Philip Morris USA Youth Smoking Prevention, Teenage Attitudes and Behavior Study, 2002.

Another study asked 11–17-year-olds how many of their friends smoke. Of those who said all or most of their friends smoke, 44% smoke as well. This study also finds that positive peer influence is closely tied to not smoking—99% of kids who said that none of their friends smokes don't smoke either.

## Parents and Peer Pressure

As your child grows into a teen, he may seem to tune out much of what you say. But research shows that parents are still the strongest influence on adolescents' big decisions, like whether to smoke, drink or have sex.

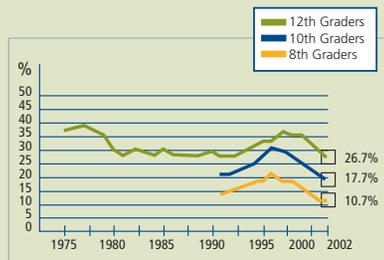
Teenagers who *don't* smoke say the main reason is their parents. Kids know and respect their parents' expectations—if their parents have stated them clearly and repeatedly.<sup>3,4</sup>

Peers and pop culture will probably influence your child's choice of clothing, hairstyles, music and the like. That's OK. You might not like their music or the way they look, but if you let them make these relatively minor decisions, they are more likely to listen to you on the ones that really matter—like not smoking.

Your influence is real. You are in the best place to help guide your child as he struggles with peer pressure, examines his options, and gradually becomes a mature, independent thinker.

## Youth Smoking Facts

Students who stated they smoked at least one cigarette in the past 30 days.



Source: Monitoring The Future Study, a continuing study of American youth conducted by the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research.

Youth smoking is on the decline nationally<sup>5</sup> but is still a significant problem:

- More than one in four high school students smoke cigarettes.<sup>5</sup>
- More than one in five high school students say they smoked a cigarette before age 13.<sup>6</sup>
- Almost two-thirds of 11–17-year-olds who smoke got their first cigarette from a friend.<sup>7</sup>
- The younger people are when they start smoking, the more likely they are to become addicted to nicotine.<sup>1</sup>

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People. A Report of the Surgeon General. 1994. 2. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). Malignant Neglect: Substance Abuse and America's Schools. 2001. 3. Jackson C, Henriksen L, Do as I say: parent smoking, antismoking socialization and smoking onset among children. Addictive Behaviors. 1997. 4. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Keeping Youth Drug Free. 2002. 5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Trends in Cigarette Smoking Among High School Students—United States, 1991–2001. 2002. 6. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Results, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2002. 7. Philip Morris USA Youth Smoking Prevention. Teenage Attitudes and Behavior Study, 2002.

# Insights and tools

## When are they vulnerable?

You may remember the excitement of moving up to middle school or high school. But you may not recall how it feels to walk into the lunchroom and believe everyone is scrutinizing your words, your walk, your clothes... your entire worth.

During the ups and downs of adolescence, these transitions can be especially challenging times. Kids can be overwhelmed and intimidated by the new surroundings, new faces and their sudden fall in stature from being the oldest in school to the youngest. They begin to experience more pressure to try things they know aren't right.

Encouragement from friends to smoke cigarettes is one of the new pressures your child might encounter. A 2002 study showed that among 11–17-year-olds who smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days:

- 73% were with friends when they tried their first cigarette.<sup>1</sup>
- 64% got their first cigarette from a friend's pack.<sup>1</sup>



## How can I help?

Below are some good reminders of ways you can help your child resist peer pressure and remain strong through some of the more challenging times.

### See Through Their Eyes

As they develop, adolescents often struggle to understand how others—especially their peers—view them. They worry about being rejected if they don't fit in.

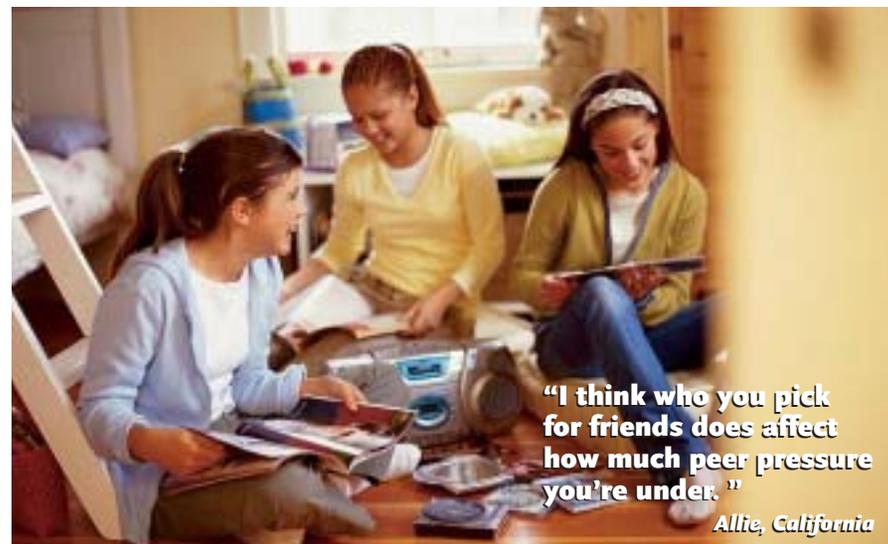
Reassure your child that while friends will sometimes hassle her for not going along, many times they won't. Either way, the most important thing is for her to make her own decisions.

Adolescents also tend to overestimate how many people are actually involved in risky behaviors. Adolescents in a recent survey said they think that more than 50% of teens smoke; the actual number is closer to 25%.<sup>2</sup> Make sure your child knows that the large majority of both kids and adults simply DO NOT smoke.

### Set Boundaries

Your expectations must be clear. Your rules must be clear. This goes for the things your child shouldn't do, such as smoking and drinking, as well as for privileges such as driving and curfews. Involve him in setting some boundaries and rules (curfews, for example), but remember that on important topics, like smoking and drinking, you should have the final say. Make sure he knows that the consequences for breaking rules will be enforced.

1. Philip Morris USA Youth Smoking Prevention Teenage Attitudes and Behavior Study, 2002. 2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Trends in Cigarette Smoking Among High School Students—United States, 1991–2001. 2002.



**"I think who you pick for friends does affect how much peer pressure you're under."**

*Allie, California*

## Know Your Child's Friends

Knowing your child's friends is actually just the beginning. Make her friends feel welcome in your home—when you're there. If they're comfortable, they'll spend more time at your home and less time in unsupervised places.

Pay attention to how the kids interact with you and with each other. Are the relationships equal and respectful? Do your kids hold their own when they're joking or goofing around, or do they seem to be easily influenced by what their friends say to them? Use these observations for discussion with your child.

If one of her friends smokes, tell your daughter you disapprove of the smoking; don't say

"I don't like your friend." If you focus on the behavior, she will be more likely to discuss the friend's smoking and not be defensive. Point out the friend's positive qualities as well as the negative.

Reward your child for making good choices in friends. Extend his curfew once in a while when he's with those friends, or have him invite the group over and treat them to pizza.

Know the friends' families too. When you drive your daughter to a friend's house, introduce yourself to the parents. If she plans to attend a party, let her know you'll call the host's parents and ask what's planned.

*continued on page 8*

## Build Their Confidence

**Teens who feel good about themselves are more likely to handle peer pressure successfully and say "no" to smoking.**

**Help them shine.** To build healthy self-esteem, help your child discover and develop her strengths. Whether she's good at sports, music, training the family dog or organizing neighborhood games, tell her so and give her more opportunities to use her talents. If he is skilled with computers, ask him to help you with projects.

**Be positive.** Sometimes parents spend too much time and energy telling a child what he does wrong. Make a point to talk more often about what he does well.

**Show your pride.** Display artwork, photos, certificates and other mementos. Share her success stories with relatives and friends.

**Teach them to learn from mistakes.** Help your child see mistakes as opportunities to improve, not as failures. Talk about the things you've learned from your own mistakes.

continued from page 7

### Manage Stress

Stress is a big factor in both peer pressure and youth smoking.<sup>1</sup> Here's how you can help:

- Be on the lookout for signs of stress. You know your child best, but some common signs include: frequent headaches, feeling irritable, chest or stomach pain, anxiety, withdrawal or sleep problems.
- Teach your child to prioritize activities. If she's doing too many things, help her figure out what she likes most about each activity, and then decide which one(s) to drop.
- Help him learn to keep things in perspective. Empathize with his feelings, even if you think

the problem is minor. ("I can see how angry you are that you weren't invited to that party.") Once he's no longer so upset, help him see the positive things in his life, and remind him that you and his friends will still care about him no matter what.

- Show her the way. When you practice ways to reduce and manage stress, she will follow your example. Exercise, sleep, eat well, have fun!

### Encourage Independent Thinking

Help your child practice thinking for herself. Encourage her to be a leader, to form opinions and make decisions based on her own judgment.

Ask questions like, "What do you think of

## Make Them Strong

"I was at a party and somebody offered me a cigarette," says Sarah, 14. "I said 'no thanks,' and it was cool. I thought it would be a big deal, but it was so easy."

When faced with tough choices, will your child be as self-confident as Sarah? Teach her the 5 Knows and the 5 Nos.

### 5 Knows

1. **Know yourself.** Think about who you are, who you want to become and what you believe in. Know your family's beliefs and values. When faced with a difficult choice, ask yourself, "Does this fit with who I want to be?"
2. **Know the facts.** Some decisions can be based on simple facts. For example, smoking is addictive and expensive, and causes serious diseases. It's illegal to sell cigarettes to minors.
3. **Know the situation.** Before going along with friends, know what you're getting yourself into. Where are they going? What will they do? Who will be there? When and how will you get home?
4. **Know when to ask questions.** If you don't know the facts and the situation, ask questions. Make sure you get answers.
5. **Know how to get help.** Everyone needs help at times. Think about which responsible adults in your life you can turn to for guidance and support when you need it. Remember, asking for help is usually a sign of strength, not weakness.

### 5 Nos

1. **Plain and simple.** "No thanks." Like Sarah discovered, sometimes the most direct way is the simplest and most effective.
2. **Forceful.** Some kids have enough self-confidence to say no in a way that their friends will never ask again. "Are you crazy? Those things can kill you."
3. **The strict parent.** Tell your child he can always use you as a way to say "no." "My mom would smell the smoke and I'd get in trouble."
4. **The switch.** Come up with a better plan. "I'm gonna go swim some laps at the Y. Want to go with me? You can't smoke if you're gonna do that."
5. **The friend.** Remind your child that a real friend won't ditch her if she doesn't go along with the crowd. Have her use the same logic with the friend: "If you were really my friend, you wouldn't ask me to do something that could make me sick."

**"Your parents have a better sense than your friends of what's good for you and what's not."**

*Erik, Colorado*



what that group's doing? What do you think of their choices?" Remember that having him think through these problems can be just as important as the answers he comes up with. The more he trusts himself and his ability to make independent decisions, the less vulnerable he'll be to peer pressure.

### Show and Teach Empathy

Empathy involves seeing things from your child's perspective so you can understand her emotions. When you show empathy for your child's feelings, you teach her that you value her thoughts. This helps her learn to trust herself. It also helps her understand your perspective as a parent: "I knew you might worry, so I called home."

### Get Them Involved

Some kids take inappropriate risks, including smoking cigarettes, because they're bored.<sup>1</sup> Getting your child involved in groups or clubs that fit her interests can reduce the chances of boredom and provide her with a new set of strengths. Besides building her confidence by helping her to achieve something positive, being involved in activities can expose her to a group of peers who share her interests, as well as to coaches or group leaders who can reinforce your message and be mentors and role models.

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Keeping Youth Drug Free. 2002.

# Teach kids to think on their feet

Resisting peer pressure takes practice. Use this exercise to help prepare your child for tough situations.

“Peer pressure feels like having a spotlight shined on you in a big crowd,” says Logan, 17, from Michigan. “You need to make a decision quickly and you don’t know what to do.”

Your child may find himself in that harsh spotlight many times during adolescence. To help him prepare for tough decisions, do this exercise together. It’s designed as a discussion starter. There’s more than one right answer.



Start with the following problems which give some conclusions you and your child might reach. Then do the exercises in the box. As you work through them, discuss:

**The setup.** Review the situation.

**The deal.** Discuss the pros and cons of going along.

**Conclusion.** Decide on the appropriate action.

**What you could say.** Talk about graceful ways to address the situation.

Remind your child that if his friends do get angry, their anger will probably pass quickly. If it doesn’t, then they’re not good friends.

## Problem 1: The Ride

**The setup.** Your girlfriend wants a ride to the mall, but you only have a learner’s permit. Should you drive her alone?

**The deal.** If you do it, you might look cool and get to spend time with her. But it’s illegal and dangerous. If you get caught, you could lose your permit and not be able to get your license. **Conclusion.** It’s not worth the risk.

**What you could say.** “For now, I can only drive if a parent is in the car. My mom can give us a ride.” Or, “It’s gonna be great when I get my license. Then I can take you places. If I lose my permit, I won’t get my license for a long time.”

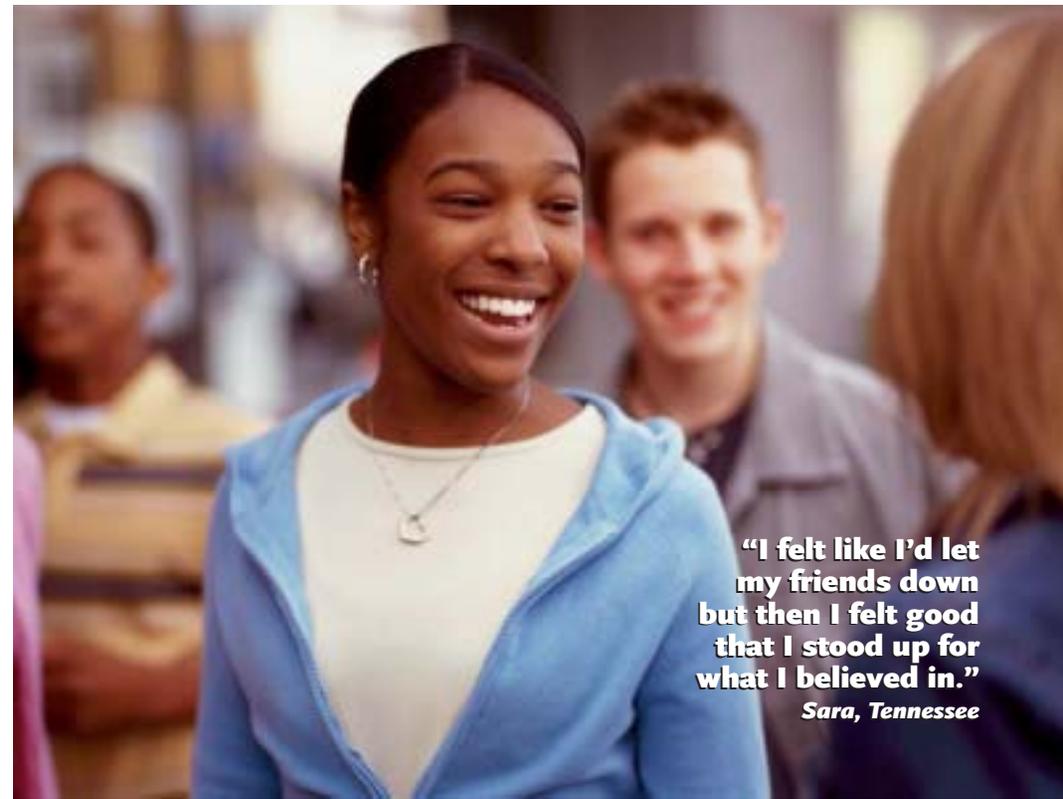
## Problem 2: Smoking Friend

**The setup.** One of your best friends has started smoking, and some of your other friends are leaning on you to pressure him to quit.

**The deal.** If you talk to your friend, he may see that you have his best interests in mind and think you’re a good friend. Or, he might not appreciate you bugging him about it. If you don’t, his health is at risk. And your other friends might lose respect for you.

**Conclusion.** It’s worth the risk to lean on your friend to stop smoking.

**What you could say.** The facts approach: “Why are you smoking, anyway? Don’t you know it’s bad for you? You can get hooked really quickly. You’re just wasting your money.” Or the teasing-but-true approach: “That stuff reeks. Nobody will kiss you if you smoke.”



“I felt like I’d let my friends down but then I felt good that I stood up for what I believed in.”

Sara, Tennessee

## What Would You Do?

Work together with your child to come up with solutions to these problems.

1. A friend asks you to carry her cigarettes in your backpack because her parents suspect she’s smoking and might go through her stuff.
2. You’re with friends and one of them suggests trying to sneak into an R-rated movie.
3. You’re babysitting and your boyfriend wants to come over after the kids have gone to bed.
4. You’re at a store with a friend and he dares you to steal a candy bar.
5. At a recent party, you tried a cigarette and drank some beer. You don’t want to smoke or drink again, but at the next party, your friends remember your previous actions and assume you will do the same this time.
6. A girl you like asks if she can copy your test during class.
7. A friend asks you to download a pirated copy of a recently released movie with the file-sharing program on your computer.
8. You’re with friends at a restaurant and they begin making fun of the waitress. Everyone is joining in, but you feel sorry for her.
9. Your sister is planning to have a party when your parents are out of town this weekend. She says you’re invited—and that you can’t tell your parents.

Visit the Parent Resource Center at [www.philipmorrisusa.com](http://www.philipmorrisusa.com) for an expanded version of this exercise and more information about how to talk to your child about not smoking.

# If you smoke

Even if you smoke, you can talk to your child about not smoking.

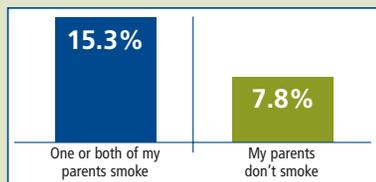
Like most adults who smoke, Roger started when he was a teenager: “Everybody I ran around with smoked. My parents smoked too.” And like most parents who smoke, Roger finds it difficult to talk to his children about it.

You may feel guilty. You may think that because your child has told you again and again not to smoke, he would never try it. Or you might feel like a hypocrite telling him not to smoke when it’s something he knows you do. You’re not alone. Most parents who smoke feel the same way. But you’re still the parent. You set the rules.

As the chart shows, children whose parents smoke cigarettes are at much greater risk for starting the habit themselves.<sup>1</sup> But you can decrease your child’s likelihood of smoking if you let him know clearly and repeatedly that you don’t approve.<sup>2</sup>

## Effect of Parental Smoking

Percentage of 11–17-year-olds who smoked a cigarette at least once in the past 30 days who reported that:



Source: Philip Morris USA Youth Smoking Prevention, Teenage Attitudes and Behavior Study, 2002.

- **Spell out the reasons why your child shouldn’t smoke.** Keep in mind that he is more likely to respond to the immediate effects—the cost, smelly clothes, yellow teeth and bad breath—rather than the long-term health risks associated with smoking.
- **Set consequences** for smoking, and be prepared to follow through. Let her know that smoking is simply unacceptable.



**“Yes, I found it difficult to talk to my kids about smoking. But I told them not to do it because it’s a dangerous and unhealthy habit.”**

**Colleen, Wisconsin**

- **Share your story.** Talk about why you started to smoke. If you began smoking because your friends smoked, tell him. When you first started, how long did you think you would keep smoking? Has that changed? Talk about your addiction to cigarettes and the effect smoking has had on your health. If you have tried to quit, make sure he knows how difficult it is.

# If your child smokes

“My son was 13 when I suspected he was smoking. I could smell it on his clothes. I asked him if he was smoking and he said ‘yes,’” says Kathryn, a Midwestern mother of three. “I couldn’t believe he would smoke. When he was younger he was so against it. He’s a smart kid and he clearly understands the risks. I was shocked that he’d try it.”

Some wake-up calls are more subtle than Kathryn’s. Maybe some of your daughter’s friends are smoking or your son’s hair smells of tobacco. These are signs that your child may have tried smoking. What do you do?

- **Stay calm.** Start by asking questions about what’s going on. How long has she been smoking? Do her friends smoke?
- **Enforce the consequences** of the rules you have set about not smoking.
- **Without lecturing, remind him of the negative effects of smoking,** such as the expense, how it causes wrinkles, bad breath, and diseases like cancer.
- **Discuss the signs of addiction:**
  - having strong urges to smoke
  - feeling anxious or irritable when you’re not smoking
  - having tried unsuccessfully to quit

Tell her it’s possible for teens to become addicted after only a few weeks of smoking.<sup>3</sup> If you think she is addicted, take her to your family doctor to help her find a cessation program that has been successful with teens. Programs like N-O-T (Not-On-Tobacco), developed by the American Lung Association, and E.N.D. (Ending Nicotine Dependence) developed by the Utah Department of Health, are specifically designed for teens.

For more information about these programs, go to their websites:

- [www.lungusa.org/school/not\\_teens.html](http://www.lungusa.org/school/not_teens.html)
- [www.tobaccofreeutah.org/end.html](http://www.tobaccofreeutah.org/end.html)

1. Philip Morris USA Youth Smoking Prevention Teenage Attitudes and Behavior Study, 2002. 2. Jackson C, Henriksen L, Do as I say: parent smoking, antismoking socialization and smoking onset among children. Addictive Behaviors. 1997. 3. DiFranza JR et al. Initial symptoms of nicotine dependence in adolescents. Tobacco Control. 2000.

# Resources

For more information on this important topic, please visit some of the websites listed on the next page. You will also find a Parent Resource Center at [www.philipmorrisusa.com](http://www.philipmorrisusa.com) that offers advice from child development and parenting experts on raising kids who don't smoke. Key features of the Parent Resource Center include:

**Tips** on talking to your kids about not smoking, including topics such as:

- Starting the conversation
- What if I smoke?
- Is talking enough?

**Answers** to questions such as:

- At what age do kids first try smoking?
- Where do kids usually get their cigarettes?
- How much influence do other smokers have on my kids?

**Interactive parenting publications,**

written in conjunction with an expert advisory board:

- Issue 1: *Raising kids who don't smoke*
- Issue 2: *Peer pressure & smoking*

You can also order these parenting publications by calling, toll-free, 1-800-PMUSA-YSP (1-800-768-7297).



# More Resources

For more information on this important topic, here are some suggested websites:

## GENERAL INFORMATION ON SMOKING

American Cancer Society  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/tobacco](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco)

Office of the Surgeon General  
[www.surgeongeneral.gov](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov)

## INFORMATION ON YOUTH SMOKING PREVENTION

CDC's TIPS for Youth Program  
[www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tips4youth.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tips4youth.htm)

National Parent Information Network  
[www.npin.org](http://www.npin.org)

National PTA  
[www.pta.org/commonsense](http://www.pta.org/commonsense)

Philip Morris USA  
Youth Smoking Prevention  
[www.philipmorrisusa.com/ysp](http://www.philipmorrisusa.com/ysp)

Smoke-Free Kids  
[www.sph.unc.edu/smokefreekids](http://www.sph.unc.edu/smokefreekids)

## QUIT-SMOKING PROGRAMS AND INFORMATION

American Cancer Society's Complete Guide to Quitting  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

CDC's Useful Resources to Quit Smoking  
[www.cdc.gov/tobacco/how2quit.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/how2quit.htm)

GottaQuit  
[www.gottaquit.com](http://www.gottaquit.com)

**NOTE:**  
Website addresses and content are subject to change.

This brochure contains citations to a number of third-party information sources. Above are listed some websites you may wish to visit for additional information. The inclusion of these sources and websites in no way indicates their endorsement, support or approval of the contents of this brochure or the policies or positions of Philip Morris USA and its Youth Smoking Prevention department.



**"It felt good to say no and be accepted. They didn't treat me differently after that."  
Allie, California**



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This brochure is not intended to offer medical or psychological advice.

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Youth Smoking Prevention by Meredith Integrated Marketing in conjunction with an expert advisory board. As the manufacturer of a product intended for adults who smoke that has serious health effects, Philip Morris USA is committed to helping prevent kids from smoking cigarettes. We have a dedicated Youth Smoking Prevention department that supports positive youth development programs, produces advertising for parents and conducts ongoing research to help prevent youth smoking.

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(1-800-768-7297).