



## Being smoke-free

**Great news!** Smoking rates in young people have been declining steadily for the last 20 years due to a range of strategies such as tobacco education in schools; laws targeting tobacco sales, packaging and advertising; and health campaigns targeting young people. However, it is still an important part of your child's health education program to learn about:

- the effects of smoking on the body
- ways to avoid passive smoking
- the range of reasons why young people choose to smoke
- friends, family, the media and laws that can both positively and negatively influence young peoples' attitudes about smoking.

It is also a conversation that you should have with your children, just as you would for any other health-related topic.

The good news is that the longer your children delay trying smoking, the more likely it is that they will remain smoke free and healthy. It's also reassuring to know that most children who try cigarettes don't go on to be regular smokers.

### Here are some useful tips on what you can do and say to encourage your children to remain smoke-free:

- Let your children know that most young people their age do not smoke.
- Encourage your children to make their own decisions.
- Try asking your children questions such as, *What would you say if a friend offered you a cigarette and you didn't want one?*
- Help your children practise refusal skills so they can stand by their decision not to smoke but still keep their friendships going like – *I think I'm coming down with a cold, my throat's sore – no thanks!* Or, *My mum can smell cigarette smoke at 5 paces – she'll ground me for a week if she finds out or I just don't want to smoke thanks.*
- Ask your children why they think some young people choose to smoke (eg being part of a group, think it is a sign of independence or makes you look cool) and talk with them about ways to achieve these things without smoking.
- Make your home smoke free, or at least, only allow smoking outside.
- Be a healthy example, don't smoke. If you do smoke, quitting will have a huge influence on your children's attitude to smoking.
- If you smoke, have you explained to your children what you think about smoking and how hard it can be to quit.
- Don't ask your children to buy cigarettes for you, as this is illegal.
- When you see people smoking, talk to your children about how easily people become dependent on nicotine and about the positive aspects of being a non-smoker – saving money, no smelly hair or clothes, and a greater fitness level.

While there is no sure way to prevent young people from experimenting with cigarettes, if you think your child may have done this, make it clear that you don't approve of smoking.

*Clearing the air: Talking with children and teenagers about smoking* is available at <http://www.quit.org.au/downloads/resource/communities/youth/clearing-the-air-talking-children-teens-about-smoking-brochure.pdf>



For information about tobacco visit the Australian Drug Foundation website <http://www.druginfo.adf.org.au/>

For advice or support about smoking or quitting visit <http://www.quitnow.gov.au/> or call the Quitline on 137 848.