

Talk about tobacco. Again.



How to talk about tobacco
with your child.



Healthy Maine Partnerships

Partnership For A Tobacco-Free Maine

Bureau of Health, Maine Department of Health and Human Services



You have good reasons to speak up about tobacco.

Tobacco is addicting more children.

Nationally, almost ninety percent of new smokers are children and teenagers.

Nothing kills like tobacco.

Many parents think drugs and alcohol are the greatest health threats to their children. But tobacco kills more people than illegal drugs, alcohol, AIDS, and car crashes combined.

Tobacco may lead to worse drugs.

Tobacco will not necessarily cause young people to use hard drugs. But it can set up a pattern that puts your child at greater risk to use alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine.

It's time to talk.

As a parent, you're the greatest influence in your child's life. That's true despite peer pressure and all the music, TV, and movies your child takes in.

START EARLY.

There should be no such thing as “the tobacco talk.” Once is not enough. Start an ongoing conversation with your kids about tobacco at age 5 or 6, and continue through high school. Don't wait. Some children begin smoking at 11 and are addicted by their early teens. As your kids get older, discuss the health effects of tobacco in more detail.

USE THE FACTS.

The dangers of tobacco are well known. Tobacco causes lung and heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Tobacco contains nicotine, one of the most addictive drugs known. It's a hard addiction to break at any age. Remind your children that no cigarette—whether filtered, low-tar, or additive-free—is safe. Smokeless tobacco is also dangerous because it causes oral cancer and is very addictive.

Young people often ignore the long-term dangers of smoking. But they will notice some effects right away: yellow teeth, bad breath, smelly clothes. Chewing tobacco has much the same effect, even reducing the sense of smell and taste. Tobacco makes a smoker less attractive, not more.

It's possible that someone in your family has died or is suffering from an illness caused by tobacco. Talk about it. A real example shows your kids what happens to people who use tobacco.

When your child asks about tobacco, be clear, direct, and honest. The truth is that tobacco is a killer.

DON'T ALLOW SMOKING IN YOUR HOME.

Set a strict rule that tobacco can't be used in your home. If guests, friends, or relatives insist on smoking, send them outside.

TALK ABOUT TOBACCO MESSAGES AND ADS.

Smoking is made to look glamorous in movies, television, and ads. The reality of tobacco use is far different, with very ugly results—from rotting gums and wrinkles to disease and early death.

Don't let your child wear clothing or carry items such as backpacks with tobacco brand names. This is just more advertising for the multi-billion-dollar Tobacco Industry.

OFFER A WAY TO SAY "NO."

Teach your child ways to refuse tobacco. Try:

- Saying "no" firmly
- Giving a reason why— "I'm not into smoking" or "My parents would kill me"
- Leaving— going home or having another excuse

TELL YOUR CHILDREN WHAT YOU WILL DO IF YOU FIND THEM SMOKING.

Be clear with your child that there will be punishment. This might be taking away privileges such as playing video games, driving, going to the movies, etc. Always follow through to show that you are serious.

GET INVOLVED WITH THE COMMUNITY.

Ask your local school to offer tobacco education as part of a health or science class. Insist that school events are tobacco-free. Work with other parents or organizations such as the PTA to meet your goals.

ASK EXPERTS FOR THEIR ADVICE.

Start by asking your child's doctor. Health professionals are good sources of information, and they already know your family. And talk to parents who have raised tobacco-free children. What they learned could be very helpful.

IF YOUR CHILD SMOKES ALREADY

- Advise your child to stop.
- Be helpful and respectful.
- Work with your child to find his or her own reasons to quit.
- Set a quit date and work toward it.
- Ask your child's doctor for help.
- Have your child call the Maine Tobacco HelpLine for help that's tailored to teenagers.

**Need help to quit?
Call Today.**

1-800-207-1230

THE MAINE TOBACCO HELPLINE

**It's free and confidential.
And it works.**



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John Elias Baldacci, Governor

John R. Nicholas, Commissioner

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