



## Youth and Smoking

Although most youth don't smoke, still roughly 20% of high school students and 6% of middle school students in the United States do according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Each day, roughly 3,600 people between the ages of 12 and 17 try smoking a cigarette for the first time, and many continue to smoke.

### Why should you quit?

The message is everywhere. Smoking is bad for your health. You may have heard this so many times that you are no longer tuned in when someone says that tobacco use causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and can eventually lead to death. You may not be listening anymore because you think these things can't happen to you at such a young age and that only adults get sick or die from smoking. But 90% of all adult smokers started smoking when they were teenagers, and as you get older, quitting may be more difficult. No matter how old you are, you're putting yourself at risk if you smoke. In fact, if current smoking rates stay the same, more than 6.3 million kids under 18 will eventually die from a smoking-related disease.

Even though the health hazards associated with smoking are well known, there are many other reasons to quit. If you quit:

- Your teeth will stay white
- Your breath will smell better
- Your clothes and car won't stink like smoke
- You will be able to play sports and do activities better

- You will get rid of that phlegm build-up and smokers' cough
- You will save money to buy the things you really want
- People will stop hassling you about smoking!

### The tobacco industry

Because smoking behavior picked up while you're young may be carried on into adulthood, the tobacco industry targets your age group by using ads that appeal to young people; industry folks have even admitted to doing so. Through use of forums such as music videos, movies and magazines, the industry is trying to make smoking seem glamorous and cool and trying to convince you to start. But these are just images, not reality. The truth? Most people don't smoke, and you'll find that to be the case among adults, your favorite actors and athletes and even your own friends.

### How can you quit?

Quitting smoking is hard. But you know so many good reasons to quit and to quit now. It doesn't matter how much you smoke, even if you only smoke socially—cigarettes are harming you. Most teens say they want to quit tobacco and many have been successful. Although some have even been able to quit on their own, you don't have to go it alone. You can talk to your parents about getting help to quit or you can look for social support groups to bounce ideas off others who are going through the same challenge. Review our *Quitting Smoking* fact sheet for more information.