



How parents can discourage use of tobacco, e-cigarettes

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Parents and caregivers can do several things to make sure their children don't start smoking. And they can get help from their child's pediatrician.

Pediatricians can talk to children and adolescents about the dangers of smoking cigarettes and e-cigarettes. They also can explain treatment options for youths and parents who want to quit using tobacco products.

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States. Nearly 90% of adults who smoke cigarettes daily said they started smoking before they were 18.

A national survey showed that 11% of students reported using tobacco products in 2022, and e-cigarettes are the most popular product. Youths who use e-cigarettes (also called vaping) are more likely to smoke traditional cigarettes in the future.

Pediatricians can talk about how smoking and vaping affect health. Nicotine, found in tobacco and e-cigarettes, is very addictive and can damage the developing brain.

Tobacco and nicotine also can harm the lungs and trigger asthma attacks. Severe attacks can be life-threatening.

One of the best ways parents can prevent their children from smoking is to practice healthy habits themselves. Children whose parents do not smoke are less likely to become smokers.

Caregivers also should make sure their children aren't exposed to smoke from tobacco products. They should not smoke or vape near their children or allow anyone else to do so.

Caregivers also should not smoke indoors, in their car or in places that children spend time. Smoke and vapor can stay on upholstery, clothing and carpeting. Children who play on or near contaminated surfaces can develop breathing problems.

Caregivers who smoke can talk to their child's pediatrician about how to quit. When parents quit smoking, they not only increase their own life expectancy but also reduce their child's exposure to smoke.

More information on preventing tobacco use among children is available from HealthyChildren.org at <http://bit.ly/3JzGSol>.

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