

Chapter 20 Parent Letter and Activities

Dear Parent or Guardian,

One of the greatest threats to teen health is tobacco. Smoking is the single most preventable cause of early death. Approximately 450,000 people—almost twice as many males as females, die each year from tobacco-related diseases. Over 15 percent of middle school students and over 34 percent of high school students use tobacco products; about 3,000 teens use tobacco every day. In health class, we will be examining the effects of tobacco products on the body. We will explore tobacco's harmful physical effects and the social pressures that influence teens to smoke. We will also discuss methods by which teens can avoid tobacco use.

The following topics will be discussed in this chapter:

- The Health Risks of Tobacco Use.
- Choosing to Live Tobacco Free.
- Promoting a Smoke-Free Environment.

Please reinforce our classroom work by discussing with your son or daughter one or more of the following topics: Discuss with your teen any questions or concerns he or she may have about tobacco use. What are the short- and long-term, negative effects of tobacco use? If you are a nonsmoker, share with your teen your reasons for making this choice. If you smoke, share the reasons you started and discuss the effects it has had on your life. Encourage your teen to share the reasons he or she believes some teens feel compelled to use tobacco and reinforce ways teenagers can avoid the trap of using tobacco products. Discuss methods to overcome peer pressure. Share strategies for your teen to defend his or her right to a smoke-free environment. If your teen does use tobacco, encourage him or her to join a cessation program.

By stressing the consequences of tobacco use and the benefits of remaining tobacco free, I hope we can work together to convince your child to remain or become tobacco free. Thank you for supporting our classroom work. Feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss your teen's health.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher

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