

Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is the leading cause of death and disability throughout the world. It contributes to one in every six deaths in the United States.

Tobacco contains over 4000 chemicals. Tar, a sticky substance in tobacco smoke, contains at least 3500 chemicals. Nicotine, a drug found in tobacco, causes physical and psychological addiction. Nicotine dulls taste buds, constricts blood vessels, and increases blood pressure and heart rate. Because nicotine is highly addictive, people who use tobacco find it extremely difficult to quit. When smokers attempt to quit, they experience withdrawal, an uncomfortable craving for nicotine.



Smoking during pregnancy can result in low birth weight for the infant. Smoking during adolescence reduces the rate of lung growth and the level of maximum lung function that could be achieved. As a result, adolescents who smoke experience shortness of breath, coughing spells, and wheezing. This reduced lung function in one's youth can lead to bronchitis, emphysema, and lung cancer in adulthood. Cigarette smoking can lead to strokes and contributes to the development of heart disease and hardening of the arteries in the arms, legs, and other parts of the body. Smoking also causes bad breath and discolored teeth and fingers.

An adolescent may begin smoking for a variety of reasons. Some start for social reasons: their friends do it or they consider it "cool." Unfortunately, many adolescents smoke despite the risks involved because the health problems smoking causes may not become evident until an adolescent has already become addicted to nicotine.

Determine whether the statements below are true or false. Write T or F in each blank. Rewrite each false statement to make it true.

1. ___ Tobacco use during adolescence is harmless as long as the person quits before adulthood.

2. ___ It is easy to quit smoking.

3. ___ Nicotine is the only chemical in cigarettes.

4. What do you think is the most common reason adolescents begin smoking? What method would be most effective in discouraging adolescents from smoking?
