



CELEBRATE A SMOKE-FREE FATHER'S DAY

Father's Day is a day to celebrate dads for who they are and all of the wonderful things they do. It is also a great time for dads to remember the important role they play in influencing the choices their kids make regarding tobacco use. Unfortunately, tobacco use among men remains a serious problem: one in five men currently smoke, more than 259,000 men die every year from smoking, and 216,000 kids have already lost their dad to smoking.^{1,2,3}

Dads who smoke can celebrate Father's Day by quitting, and all dads, whether or not they smoke, can celebrate Father's Day by taking a number of effective actions to protect their kids from becoming another one of the tobacco industry's addicted customers and victims. Even if they smoke, what dads say, how they act, and the values they communicate through their words and deeds has an enormous influence whether or not kids smoke.⁴ And all dads, smokers and nonsmokers alike, can also do a lot to protect their kids from secondhand smoke.

How Can Dads Keep Their Children From Smoking?

As a parent, you are one of the most important persons in a child's life, especially when it comes to cigarettes. You can make a big difference in the choices your kids make.

- If you smoke, quit. If you can't quit, keep trying. Children from families who smoke are twice as likely to become smokers themselves -- but parents who try to quit and talk to their kids about the how addictive smoking is, why they want to quit, and how important it is to never start can beat those odds.*
- Maintain a totally smoke-free home (even if you smoke).
- Educate your child about the dangers of cigarette smoking.
 - Talk about addiction and how hard it is to quit smoking.
 - Emphasize the immediate health effects.
 - Emphasize the effects of smoking on physical appearance.
- Listen to what your child says and does about smoking and encourage your child when he/she makes good choices.
- Ask your child about his/her friends and their attitudes toward smoking. Discuss peer pressure and how to deal with it effectively.
- Clear up any misunderstandings your child might have about smoking. For example: everybody is not doing it; getting hooked can happen very quickly, and quitting is very difficult.
- Make sure your kids' schools have strong and well-enforced no-smoking rules for kids and staff.
- Support federal, state, and local tobacco-prevention efforts.⁵

How Can Dads Protect Their Children from Secondhand Smoke Harms?

Almost 60% of U.S. children aged 3–11 years—or about 22 million children—are exposed to secondhand smoke and about 25% of children aged 3–11 years live with at least one smoker.⁶ Secondhand smoke contains more than 40 substances known to cause cancer. Babies exposed to secondhand smoke face a higher risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and a range of other serious health and developmental problems, and

* For helpful information on quitting, see <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/webresources/quitting.shtml>.

exposed older children have increased rates of lower respiratory infections, ear infections, and asthma. Exposure to cigarette smoke during childhood may lead to the development of cancer during adulthood. It can also prolong and worsen numerous medical conditions, including pneumonia, bronchitis, croup, laryngitis, bronchiolitis, asthma, flu, ear infections, colds, sinus infections, sore throats, and eye irritation, leading to increased school absenteeism, emergency room visits, and hospitalizations.⁷

How can you protect your child from secondhand smoke?

- If you smoke, quit smoking – or at least keep trying.* Call the local office of the American Lung Association or American Cancer Society, talk to your doctor, or sign up for a stop-smoking course.
- Don't let anyone smoke in your home. Make sure anyone who smokes only does so outside, away from open doors and windows. If you smoke, wear a "smoking shirt", and remove it before coming into contact with your child, especially infants – and never smoke while holding, feeding, or bathing your child. And remember: smoking residues in a home (or car) can cause harm even when smoking is no longer taking place.
- Never smoke in the car, especially when your child is a passenger.
- Avoid leaving your child with someone who smokes or in smoky environments. Ask about smoking and smoke-free rules and practices when evaluating daycare centers or babysitters, or even when leaving your kids at other people's homes. And try to make sure that your child does not take a job in restaurant or other location that allows smoking.⁸
- Support strong federal, state, and local smoke-free laws.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, June 2, 2008

Related Campaign Factsheets

- *Father's Day Data on Dads Smoking & Related Harms*,
<http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0236.pdf>.
- *How Parents Can Protect Kids From Becoming Addicted Smokers*,
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0152.pdf>
- *Tobacco Use and Kids*,
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/index.php?CategoryID=3>
- *Harm to Kids from Secondhand Smoke*,
<http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0104.pdf>

¹ CDC, "Tobacco Use Among Adults—United States, 2006," *MMWR* 56(44):1157-1161, November 9, 2007,
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5644.pdf>.

² U.S. Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), "Annual Smoking-Attributable Mortality, Years of Potential Life Lost, and Productivity Losses --- United States, 1997-2001," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)* 54(25):625-628, July 1, 2005,
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/wk/mm5425.pdf>.

³ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (TFK) fact sheet: *Father's Day Data on Dads Smoking & Related Harms*,
<http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0236.pdf>.

⁴ Newman I et al., "The influence of parental attitude and behavior on early adolescent cigarette smoking," *Journal of School Health*, 59(4): 150-2, Apr. 1989. See, also, Distefan J et al., "Parental influences predict adolescent smoking in the United States, 1989-1993," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 22: 466-74, 1998.

⁵ For more detail and cites to sources, see the TFK Factsheet, *How Parents Can Protect Kids From Becoming Addicted Smokers*,
<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0152.pdf>.

⁶ HHS, *The health consequences of involuntary exposure to tobacco smoke : a report of the Surgeon General*, Atlanta, GA: HHS, CDC, Coordinating Center for Health Promotion, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006,
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/report/>;

⁷ TFK fact sheet: *Harm to Kids from Secondhand Smoke*: <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0104.pdf>.

* For helpful information on quitting, see <http://tobaccofreekids.org/research/webresources/quitting.shtml>.

⁸ TFK fact sheet: *How Parents Can Protect Kids From Becoming Addicted Smokers*, <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0152.pdf>.