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## What Kids Say About: Tobacco

It's unhealthy to smoke cigarettes or chew tobacco — everyone knows that. But what do kids think about these habits? KidsHealth wanted to know, so we asked 1,433 kids. Here's what they said:

### **Most kids have never tried cigarettes or chewing tobacco.**

85% of kids said they've never tried it.

10% of kids said they tried it once.

5% said they use tobacco once in a while or as often as every week.

### **Most kids live in houses where no one smokes.**

62% said no one smokes in their house.

18% said one person does.

20% said two or more people do.

### **Most kids have family members who have talked to them about the dangers of tobacco use.**

15% of kids said a family member did this once a week.

10% said a family member did this once a month.

28% said a family member did this once in a while.

24% said a family member did this once or twice.

23% said no family member had ever brought up this subject.

Though the results are encouraging, it looks like some parents still smoke and those parents may be having a tough time bringing up the issue of smoking.

Nearly 40% of kids said someone regularly smokes in their house. Those kids may be worried about these family members and really want them to stop smoking or using tobacco. We'll talk more about that at the end of this article.

## The Question of Cool

Of course, we had to ask kids if they thought smoking was cool. Not many seem to think so. Most said other kids smoke because "they think it will make them popular," but they also said that teens who smoke are very unpopular!

Then we asked an even tougher question: If your best friend tried smoking, would you? We're happy to report that the answer was mostly no. About 88% said this was very unlikely or sort of unlikely, whereas 12% thought they might go along with their best friend.

Whether kids think smoking is cool or uncool may depend on the kid — and the images he or she has seen of smokers. Sometimes, movies or ads can make smoking seem like a grown-up, edgy thing to do. Kids need to watch out for that. Even if you don't feel influenced by your friends, be careful not to think it's cool because of a clever advertising campaign.

It would be great if kids would discourage each other from trying this dangerous habit. Why? Because smoking is easy to start and hard to stop. Just ask any adult who has tried and failed to quit. And every day, more than 2,000 kids and teens become regular smokers. If that number doesn't drop, more than 6 million of those young smokers will eventually die due to smoking-related illnesses. Smoking can lead to lung cancer and other serious problems.

Here are 3 steps every kid can take:

1. Don't try cigarettes or other tobacco products.
2. Let friends know you think using tobacco is **not** cool.
3. Help friends or family members to stop smoking or using chewing tobacco.

How can you help a person quit? You might just tell the person that you care about them and that you don't want them to get sick because of smoking or tobacco use. Say that you will be supportive while they do the tough work of breaking this habit. You can't force someone to quit, but your smiling face certainly can inspire a loved one to start thinking about it!

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