

YOUTH SMOKING

November 2004

The Great American Smokeout is set for November 18, 2004. Here are some tips to help your child resist the temptation to smoke or stop smoking, if they currently smoke.

IF YOUR CHILD SMOKES: What can you do if some of your child's friends smoke, or you smell tobacco on your child's clothing or hair? What if you know they are smoking?

- ?? Stay calm... start asking questions about what's going on
- ?? Enforce consequences... you've set rules about smoking, enforce the consequences
- ?? Don't lecture!
- ?? Give reminders about the negative effects of smoking... expense, causes wrinkles, bad breath, and diseases
- ?? Discuss signs of addiction... strong urges to smoke, feeling anxious or irritable when not smoking, unsuccessfully trying to quit
- ?? Go to your family doctor to find a cessation program successful with teens

IF YOU SMOKE: Many parents who smoke find it difficult to talk to their children about it. You may have feelings of guilt or hypocrisy. You may think that because your child has told you repeatedly not smoke that he/she would never try it. But children whose parents smoke cigarettes are at a much greater risk for starting the habit themselves. You need to remember that you are the parent and you set the rules.

- ?? Spell out the reasons why your child shouldn't smoke... kids respond more to the immediate effects rather than the long-term effects
- ?? Set consequences... and be prepared to follow through... let them know that smoking is just not acceptable
- ?? Share your story... talk about why you started, when you started, how long you thought you'd smoke, if that has changed, your addiction to cigarettes, the effect of smoking on your health and how difficult it is to stop

YOUTH SMOKING AND PEER PRESSURE

Research shows that the influence of peers is the most important factor in determining when and how cigarettes are first tried. As a parent, your words DO make a difference. Teenagers who DON'T smoke say the main reason is their parents. Help your child resist peer pressure and remain strong through some of the challenging times.

- ?? Set boundaries... your rules and expectations must be clear; make sure the child knows the consequences
- ?? Know your child's friends... reward your child for making good choices in friends... and know the friends' families, too
- ?? Build their confidence... children who feel good about themselves are more likely to handle peer pressure successfully
- ?? Manage stress... be on the lookout for signs of stress; teach your child to prioritize activities; help them learn to keep things in perspective; show them the way by reducing and managing stress yourself
- ?? Encourage independent thinking... help your child to be a leader, to form opinions and make decisions on his/her own judgment
- ?? Show and teach empathy... see things from your child's perspective
- ?? Get them involved... getting involved in groups and clubs can help avoid boredom and provide the child with more strengths
- ?? Teach kids to think on their feet... practice tough situations so kids know what they'll say and do if they find themselves being pressured by peers