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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

Reprinted by:
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JANUARY 2010

WALLY CAT UPDATE

Happy New Year Wild Cub and Wild Cat Parents,

As always, I would like to thank all of my parents that allow their children to keep sending me emails.

I am so proud of my smart and talented Wild Cat and Wild Cub friends.

Parents if you have any suggestions or comments for Wally Cat, please feel free to email me wally.cat@uky.edu.

Wally Cat 



THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: SMOKING

The Truth about Tobacco and Youth

Unfortunately, children are easy targets for the tobacco industry. Kids are often influenced by their friends or by those they see on television who make smoking look glamorous or cool. They don't realize how hard it is to stop smoking once they start. Kids feel because they are young they will live forever. They are not worried about the consequences bad choices may have on their health.

Almost 90 percent of all smokers started smoking when they were young. Those who started smoking before the age of 21 have a harder time quitting compared to those who started smoking at a later age.

Teen smokers are more likely to use alcohol and illegal drugs. Studies have shown that the younger someone is when they start to smoke, the more likely they are to develop a lifelong dependency on nicotine. Don't be fooled. Nicotine is just as addictive as heroin or cocaine. It acts on the brain and the nervous system to create a

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pleasant feeling that leaves the smoker wanting to smoke more. Make no mistake. Nicotine is an addictive drug.

Fortunately, the number of kids who choose to start smoking has dropped. One reason could be that they realize smoking and tobacco use cause cancer.

Smoking Related Health Problems in Kids

Cigarette smoke and tobacco products can cause serious health problems among children.

Some of these include:

- Chronic colds and coughs
- Shortness of breath
- Excess mucus in the lungs
- Respiratory problems (such as asthma)
- Reduced physical stamina and ability
- Poor lung growth
- Poor overall health

Encourage your child to never start smoking. If your child smokes, encourage them to quit. Below are some additional reasons you can use to discourage your child from smoking.

Include these in the conversation with your child to stop or never start smoking:

• Bad odor

- Smoking causes bad breath and body odor
- No matter how much perfume or deodorant you use, it is hard to get rid of the smell of smoke once the smell gets into your clothes or hair.

• Yellow teeth

- Smoking eventually cause the enamel on your teeth to darken. The yellow stain on the teeth is difficult to remove.

• Can't keep up

- Athletes who smoke often can't keep up with their non-smoking friends. Smoking causes them to have shortness of breath, increased heart rate, and decreased blood circulation.

• Increased risk of illness

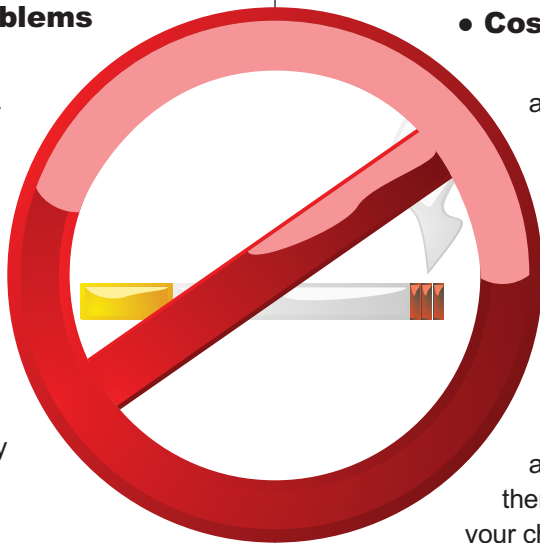
- Because many children choose to smoke as a way to control their appetite and eat less, their bodies lack the nutrients it needs to grow, develop, and fight off illnesses.
- Because smoking has a negative effect on your lungs, smokers get more colds and have the flu, bronchitis, and pneumonia more often than non-smokers.

• Cost

- Cigarettes are expensive. The average cost of a pack of cigarettes is \$4.50. This adds up to \$234 dollars a year for only one pack of cigarettes a week. Encourage your child to spend their money on something that won't quickly go up in smoke, like a new outfit or a video game.

There is no "safe" way to smoke cigarettes. The best way to make sure your child does not become addicted to smoking is to encourage them to never start smoking. Encourage your child to be their own unique, smoke-free person.

Remember, kids learn by example, if you are a smoker, take the steps necessary to try to quit. Your child will respect you for trying to quit and hopefully realize that it is better to never start.



SOURCES:

- http://www.drugabuse.gov/Published_Articles/Nicotinethreat.html
- http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_10_2X_Child_and_Teen_Tobacco_Use.asp?sitearea=PED
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/smokingandyouth.html>

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