

PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN



Pinellas County Health Department

Steps to a HealthierFL—Pinellas



The CANDY Campaign



The Sweet Taste of Addiction

Targeting youth with candy flavor tobacco

One of the tobacco industry's most outrageous new tactics is the introduction of candy-flavored cigarettes and smokeless tobacco.

Tobacco Facts in Florida

High school students who smoke	15.7%
Male high school students who use smokeless or spit tobacco	9.2%
Kids under 18 who become new daily smokers each year	23,600
Kids exposed to second-hand smoke at home	692,000
Packs of cigarettes smoked or bought by kids each year	29.9 million
Adults in Florida who smoke	21.6%

While parents can play an important role in youth smoking prevention, kids are subject to other powerful influences outside their homes that can play a critical role in whether they smoke or not. Most notably, cigarette companies spend more than \$11.2 billion per year to market and promote their products, and most of these marketing efforts reach kids. In fact, studies have found that kids are three times more sensitive to tobacco advertising than adults, are more likely to be influenced to smoke by cigarette marketing than by peer pressure and that one third of underage experimentation with smoking is attributable to tobacco company advertising and promotion. More generally, big cigarette companies have been trying to shift attention and support away from establishing effective new laws or policies to prevent and reduce tobacco use among kids by promoting the idea that the problem should be left to parents, instead. But dumping the entire burden on parents will not reduce the availability of cigarettes to underage buyers, stop tobacco marketing that reaches kids, establish smoke-free schools or otherwise reduce youth exposure to tobacco marketing and tobacco use when outside of their homes.

Parents as Anti - Smoking Role Models (Whether They Smoke or Not)

What parents say, how they act and the values they communicate through their words and deeds have an enormous influence on children and that applies to tobacco use, as well. Studies have found that parental actions, attitudes and opinions about smoking have a great deal of influence on whether or not kids smoke. A recent study found that parental antismoking actions such as having restrictions about smoking in the home or sitting in non-smoking sections of restaurants are associated with reductions in children's smoking. Specifically, parents can take the following actions to help ensure that their children remain (or become) tobacco-free:

- **If you don't smoke, don't start! If you do smoke, quit!** Research shows that children who have a parent who smokes are more likely to smoke and to be heavier smokers at young ages. When parents quit smoking, their children become less likely to start smoking and more likely to quit if they already smoke.
- **If you smoke, share your struggles to quit with your children.** Kids greatly underestimate how difficult it is to quit smoking. Showing how hard it is to quit (and making sure quitting doesn't look easy) can help lessen this false impression. Continuing to try to quit, despite the difficulties, also sends a strong anti-smoking message.
- **Maintain a smoke-free home.** A smoke-free home makes children less likely to smoke, even if their parents smoke. By not allowing anyone to smoke in their home, parents not only make smoking less convenient for their kids but also make a

powerful statement that they believe smoking is wrong.

- **Tell your kids that you don't want them to smoke and will be disappointed if they do.** Parental attitudes, opinions and feelings about their kids' smoking status greatly influence whether or not kids will smoke, even when the parents smoke.
- **Make sure your kids have the facts they need.** By making sure that their kids know how harmful smoking is, parents can help their kids to develop a firm, negative attitude about smoking practices and their consequences, and kids with such negative attitudes are less likely to smoke.
- **Destroy the myth that everybody smokes.** Many kids over-estimate the amount of smoking among their peers and such over-estimation is among the strongest predictors of smoking initiation. For example, studies show teens believe that 67% of adults smoke and that 54% of teens are current smokers, but less than 25% of adults and 17% of all teens actually do smoke.



<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0152.pdf>



For information about **Steps to a HealthierFL-Pinellas County** visit our website: www.StepsFL.com or call 820-4113.

Funding for this newsletter was supported by Program Announcement Number 03135 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Department of Health and Human Services, or the U.S. Government.