



STUDENT TOBACCO BOOKLET INTRODUCTORY MATERIAL

Today the evidence linking tobacco use to impaired health is beyond serious challenge. The regular users of this substance, particularly cigarettes, and those who are exposed to their tobacco smoke, are more likely to experience serious health problems, and, perhaps, even die prematurely. In fact, it was recently estimated that cigarette smoking costs about 434,000 lives each year, making it easily the single deadliest health behavior risk in the United States. Consequently, any contention made by the tobacco industry that tobacco use is not dangerous is little more than a groundless statement that ignores the growing weight of scientific evidence.

Tobacco is a crop of major economic importance in many parts of America. The leaves of the tobacco plant are used for smoking in pipes, cigars and cigarettes, and in “smokeless” form as snuff and chewing tobacco. These products are readily available in restaurants, service stations and stores across the nation.

Pure nicotine is an oily liquid varying in color from clear to brown. For cigarettes, the dried brown, shredded plant leaves are rolled into a paper. Chewing tobacco is made of dark moist, compressed plant leaves. “Snuff” tobacco, which is used as an inhalant, is the dry, powdered leaf of the tobacco plant.

Tobacco smoke contains thousands of chemical compounds, many of which are known to cause cancer. The main psychoactive ingredient in tobacco is nicotine, a central nervous system stimulant and one of the most popular drugs in America. Nicotine is what is responsible for the addictive nature of smoking. It has no medical or therapeutic use.

Some young people start smoking or chewing because they think it will make them look older. Tobacco does age its users—when they’re 25 they look 35, and when they are 35, they look 50. Models and actors look sexy and healthy when they smoke, and that may influence others to start. But, models and actors have makeup artists to hide their wrinkles and rotten gums, and security to keep you from smelling their nasty tobacco breath. They’re also fortunate that no one can see their decaying black lungs.

Fast Facts

1. Tobacco is one of the most widely used psychoactive drugs in the world.
2. Tobacco contains nicotine, a central nervous system stimulant.
3. Tobacco contains thousands of other chemical compounds, many of which are known to cause cancer.
4. Use of tobacco can cause heart disease, lung cancer, emphysema and many other fatal disorders.
5. Use of smokeless tobacco can be as dangerous as smoking.
6. Tobacco can harm a developing fetus.
7. Tobacco smoke can be harmful for non-smokers who breathe it.
8. It is difficult to quit smoking, but many people have done it.

Don’t Start!

If someone offers you a cigarette or a dip, say “***No thanks! I don’t smoke (or chew)!***”

End of story, don’t be tobacco’s next victim. Most users wish they had never started.