

## *Talking to Teens About Smoking*

Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States today. It increases the risk of lung cancer by up to 22 times; and it is a leading cause of stroke, chronic lung disease, and coronary heart disease. In the face of these statistics, it is astounding that more and more young people continue to smoke. Approximately 3000 children and teens in the United States become regular smokers every day.

Many teens may smoke to look more mature or to fit in with the crowd. Others smoke just to see how it feels; they think that they will try a cigarette or two and then quit. Regardless of the reasons that they smoke, teens should be aware of the fact that they can say "no" to smoking and prevent the adverse consequences of smoking on their health and that of others. Although smoking may look cool or interesting or glamorous in the short-term, the serious illnesses and even death that may come of smoking over the long-term are just not worth the risk.

Starting to smoke is easy, but quitting is quite difficult. Seven of ten teen smokers say they wish they had never started smoking, and approximately 75% of teen smokers have tried seriously at least once to quit smoking and have failed. Of the daily smokers who indicate that they will not smoke in five years, nearly 3 in 4 of them are still smoking five to six years later. Of the 70% of teens who have ever tried smoking, 36% became daily smokers during high school.

If you have not tried smoking, then you have made the right decision for your health and well-being. If you have tried smoking and are addicted, there are programs and treatments that can help you to stop. Do not be afraid to ask for help. Talk with your parents and your doctor, who can describe treatment options to help you to a healthier and longer life.