



The Dangers of Smoking: Why Kids should say NO

Smoking remains a leading cause of preventable diseases and premature deaths worldwide.

Educating kids about the dangers of smoking is crucial in empowering them to make healthy choices.

Here are some key points to discuss with children:

•**Health Risks:** Smoking can lead to various health issues, including lung cancer, heart disease, and respiratory problems.

•**Addiction:** Nicotine, the addictive substance in cigarettes, can hook users quickly, making it challenging to quit once started.

•**Secondhand Smoke:** Even if kids don't smoke themselves, exposure to secondhand smoke can still harm their health.

By fostering open conversations and providing accurate information, we can help kids understand why saying no to smoking is vital for their well-being.

Lead by Example

Children learn by example, so be a positive role model when it comes to smoking and alcohol. Avoid smoking and excessive alcohol consumption in front of children. Show them that a healthy lifestyle is achievable and rewarding.

School Nurse Expertise

From Erin Spear, School Nurse of Whitewater Unified School District: It's important to start a conversation with your child about preventing the use of tobacco, alcohol and drug use. It is recommended to start when they are young (preschool age), but it's never too late to have this talk! When you speak with your child, first find out what they already know. Teach them facts and give them clear rules on what's acceptable in your family. Be prepared to answer your child's questions and talk with them about how to say "no" if they are in a situation where tobacco, alcohol or drugs are being offered.

Tips for Parents

Build a strong bond with your children based on trust and open communication.

Research shows that kids who feel connected to their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors like smoking and alcohol use. Spend quality time together, listen actively, and be a supportive presence in their lives. Your connection can be a powerful protective factor against negative influences.

Alcohol Awareness: Making Smart Choices

Alcohol misuse among young people can have serious consequences, ranging from impaired judgment to long-term health problems. Here's what kids need to know about alcohol:

•**Risks of Underage Drinking:** Alcohol can affect developing brains and bodies differently than adults, leading to problems with memory, learning, and decision-making.

•**Peer Pressure:** Kids may feel pressure to drink from peers or media influences. Teaching them how to resist peer pressure and make independent choices is crucial.

•**Healthy Coping Strategies:** Encourage kids to find healthy ways to cope with stress and emotions instead of turning to alcohol. Activities like sports, hobbies, or talking to a trusted adult can provide support. By fostering a culture of responsible decision-making and providing support networks, we can help kids navigate the complexities of adolescence without turning to alcohol.