

My school-aged child smokes

Finding out that a young person in your family smokes might be a shock. You might feel angry, upset or worried. However, it is important that you approach the subject in a calm and supportive way. It is very likely that they will soon quit and even if they don't stop immediately, talking about the effects and different ways to quit will be helpful for the future.

What to do if your school-aged child smokes

- Find a time to talk to them when there are no distractions.
- Be calm and allow them to feel listened to.
- Don't challenge their behaviour or interrupt them.
- Ask why they smoke, who with and how often.
- Ask how it makes them feel.
- Don't lecture them. When they are receptive, gently provide them with information on the benefits of quitting. Talk about the illnesses they can 'avoid' by stopping. It is especially helpful with young people to explain how they can protect their appearance as smoking affects skin, hair and teeth. Find out what effects might be important to them.
- Be sure you don't 'support' them to smoke. Make your home and garden smokefree. Don't allow them access to your cigarettes or provide money for them.
- Remind them that the rules around under-age sales are there to protect them from harm and that they should respect school policy on smoking.

When your school-aged child wants to quit smoking

Your school-aged child is less likely to feel the physical effects of tobacco that many older smokers experience. However, there may be other reasons that they want to quit. If they show interest in quitting:

- Suggest they write down why they want to quit smoking.
- Place this list or write in a location that can be seen, easily accessed and added to.
- Encourage them to set a quit day and mark it on a calendar. Make sure they don't have any events, such as a party, that will undermine their chances of success in the first few days.
- Remove temptation – suggest they get rid of cigarettes and lighters. If you smoke, make sure your cigarettes are not in sight.

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- Remind them that ‘cutting down’ on smoking is not helpful as it makes the few cigarettes that they do smoke even more important to them and harder to quit. The best way is to stop suddenly – not even a puff.
- If you are a smoker yourself, consider quitting with them. Help is available from **smokefreehampshire.co.uk** for free.
- Help them wash the clothes that smell like cigarette smoke.
- Ask for help from **smokefreehampshire.co.uk** – nicotine replacement patches, sprays and gum may be available to help them quit.
- Ask them what triggers their urge to smoke and how they can avoid them. Add a replacement, for instance a lollipop, mints or gum.
- Be prepared for them to experience withdrawal symptoms. These may last from two to four weeks:
 - Lack of energy
 - Headaches
 - Depression
 - Stomach aches
 - Jumpiness
 - Dry mouth
 - Sore throat
 - Hunger
- Try to encourage them to be active.
- Be encouraging, not judgmental.
- If your school-aged child goes back to smoking temporarily, remind them that they have not failed and to keep going.
- Celebrate success.
- Discuss ways they may reward themselves every time they do not smoke.