



MENTONE GIRLS' SECONDARY COLLEGE

Tip Sheet

Helping your child to be a non-smoker

Lots of kids who try cigarettes don't go on to become regular smokers. In fact, by the age of sixteen, less than half of those young people who have ever smoked are still smoking regularly.

It can be frustrating to watch your children make their decisions, especially when you believe it is important for them not to get hooked on smoking. Telling them how deadly smoking can be often has little impact on teenagers who can't imagine even being as 'old' as thirty! If your children are already smoking, you may feel like arguing with them or trying to force them to stop. The fact is, they are learning to make decisions for themselves. However, you can help them make health choices.

Ten tips to try:

- 1 Be a healthy example. Don't smoke, or if you do, make a real attempt to quit. Show that you understand the danger that smoking presents to you and your family's health.
- 2 Discourage all smoking in your home. If you don't want your home to be smoke-free, limit smoking to one room only, or better still, outdoors.
- 3 Show your concern by not sending your children to the shops for cigarettes (even with a note from you). Buying your cigarettes makes it easier for them to feel confident to get their own one day.
- 4 It is against the law to sell cigarettes to those under eighteen. Your local council's health department has the responsibility for enforcing this. Support shops that won't sell cigarettes to children and tell them you appreciate their stand.
- 5 When you see tobacco promotions or people smoking, take the opportunity to talk to your children about how easily people can become dependent on smoking.
- 6 Remember, most adults started smoking as teenagers and find quitting harder than they had imagined.
- 7 Discuss the benefits of being a non-smoker. Apart from the health concerns, it will help them save money.
- 8 Young people often see good reasons for smoking, for example, being part of a group, a sign of independence, or modelling of a character from a movie or magazine. They may think these reasons are valid. Talk with them about ways to achieve the same thing without harming their physical health.
- 9 Keep out of arguments about smoking. Talk about it seriously and let them know you don't like it, but avoid lecturing or hassling them.
- 10 Listen to what they have to say, and take time to discuss some other ways to deal with various feelings.