



Nicotine Awareness Community Walk

With this fun family activity, explore your community and become more aware of the influence of advertising on youth!

Why is Talking About Nicotine Use Important?

In the SMART Moves: Nicotine Module, youth have been learning about the health risks of using tobacco products and e-cigarettes, often called vapes, and the harmful impact these products can have on their bodies, their relationships and their goals for the future. They explore the addictive qualities of nicotine, particularly the changes it causes in their developing minds.¹

Helping youth become aware of the risks of tobacco and e-cigarettes/vapes is important – most people who use tobacco (90%) begin by the age of 18. And it's not just cigarettes that are dangerous. Smokeless tobacco, hookah tobacco, cigars and e-cigarettes/vapes are all addictive and cause health problems. It is important that youth know that none of these are safe to use.

E-cigarette/vape use has become an epidemic in the U.S. and is increasing every day – about one-quarter of U.S. youth and young adults have tried e-cigarettes/vapes. These are especially dangerous because they're marketed to youth as being safer than cigarettes, but they contain nicotine and other harmful substances and using them may make young people more likely to smoke cigarettes in the future.

Nicotine Awareness Family and Caregiver Community Walk

Research studies show that more than ever before, youth are vulnerable to ads for cigarettes and e-cigarettes/vapes. Studies over the last decade have shown that about 69% of middle- and high-school students have been exposed to e-cigarette/vape advertisements in retail stores, on the Internet, in magazines/newspapers or through TV/movies. And youth are more likely to start vaping after they've seen ads for these products – especially in retail stores.²

Prepare for the Community Walk

- Think about a place in your community that might have a lot of advertisements for nicotine products: consider a busy intersection, gas stations, convenience stores or local shopping centers.
- Select a 30-minute timeframe to spend with your youth in the car or on a walk around the community.

Family and Caregiver Resource

Do the Community Walk

- Take a walk or a drive around the area you identified and look for ads for cigarettes or e-cigarettes/vapes. Make sure this area is safe and youth are supervised at all times.
- Consider checking the following places:
 - › Billboards
 - › Bus placards
 - › Bus shelters
 - › News racks/newsstands (magazines and newspapers)
 - › Mall kiosks
 - › Convenience stores, bodegas, grocery stores and pharmacies

Discuss the Community Walk

This is an excellent opportunity to get youth talking about the ads you see. You might ask questions like these to start the conversation:

- What message do you think these ads are communicating to youth?
- Why do you think advertisers want young people to start using their products early?
- What do you think about these ads?
- Do you think these ads are dishonest? If so, why?
- What would you say back to the advertisers if they would listen?

After the community walk, talk about other places youth see ads for nicotine products – on the Internet, on television, at the movies and on social media.

Providing Continued Support

- **Stay informed.** Make sure you and your youth know the facts. Visit the CDC's **Know the Risks: Get the Facts** web page (e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/getthefacts.html) to learn about how e-cigarettes/vapes work and test your knowledge.
- **Watch a video.** Watch the CDC video, **Any Volunteers? The Risk of E-Cigarettes for Young People** (e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/takeaction.html), with your child or teen to reinforce the risk to young people's development.
- **Start early.** Talk to your kids about smoking when they are 5 or 6 years old and continue through their high school years. Give a consistent message that nicotine products are unhealthy and share the reason why you want them to stay nicotine free.
- **Highlight the dangers.** Explain the health dangers of smoking, as well as the unpleasant physical aspects (such as bad breath, discolored teeth and nails).

1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019, December). "Youth and Tobacco Use" [Fact Sheet]. CDC Smoking & Tobacco Use. Retrieved from cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm.

2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2016, January). "E-cigarette Ads and youth" [Fact Sheet]. CDC Vital Signs and Youth™. Retrieved from cdc.gov/vitalsigns/ecigarette-ads/index.html.