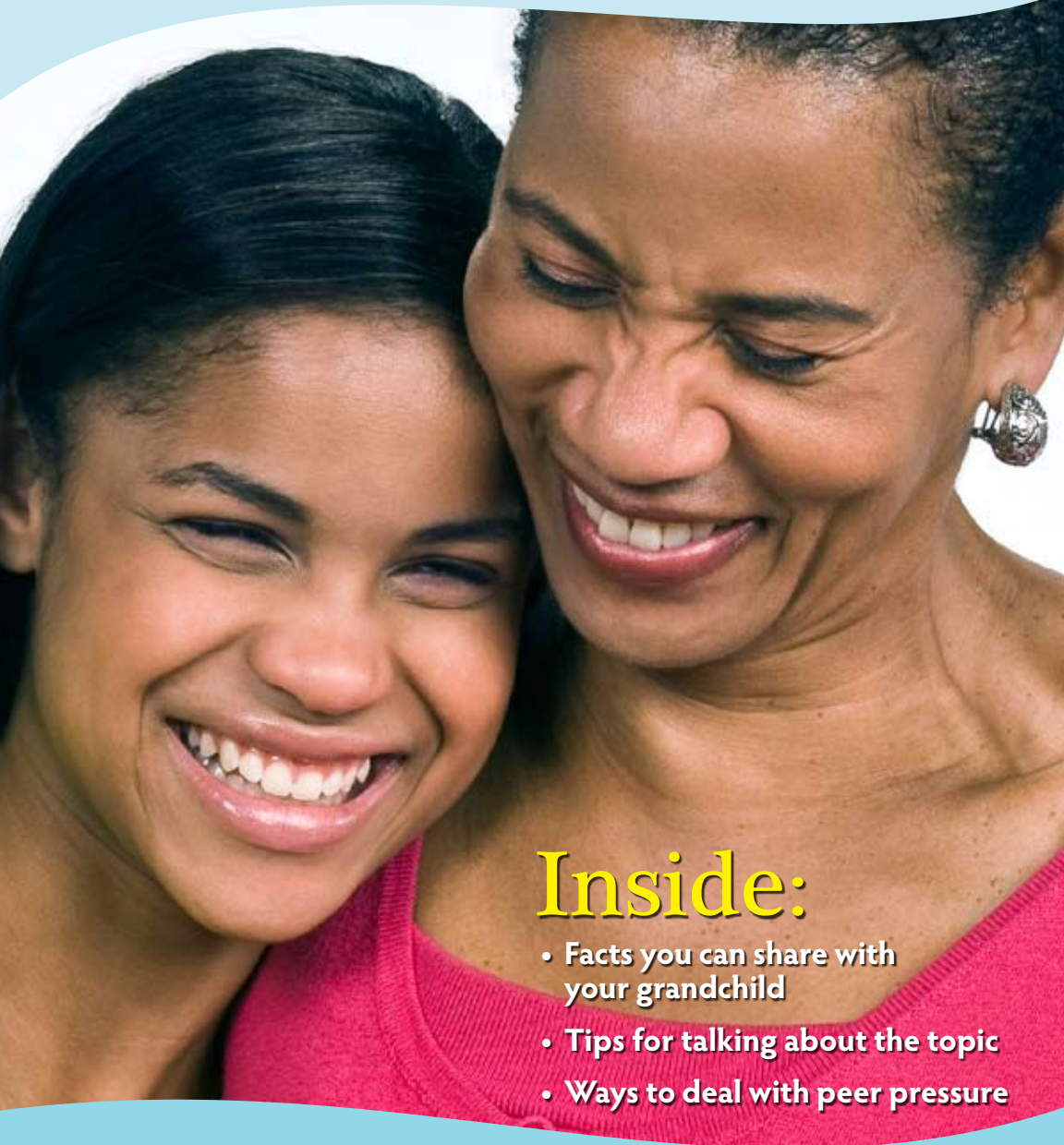


Help Your Grandchild



Be Tobacco Free



Inside:

- Facts you can share with your grandchild
- Tips for talking about the topic
- Ways to deal with peer pressure

Your Grandchild

Is Growing Up! Your grandchild is in middle school and is becoming independent, facing new challenges and experiences, and making more decisions for him or herself. Can you believe it?

Maybe you're a caregiver to your grandchild. Maybe you spend time together regularly. Or, maybe you have a long-distance relationship and e-mail, text, or talk on the phone more than you see each other. Either way, your relationship is special—grandparents have a unique bond with their grandchildren. Whether you realize it or not, you're a role model. You have experiences to share. You have influence.

Now that your grandchild is entering adolescence, use your influence and your special relationship to talk to him or her about important topics, like not using tobacco.

Why Talking About Tobacco Is Important

Cigarette smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).¹ And now that your grandchild is in middle school, he or she is at greater risk for using tobacco: Young people are most likely to try smoking for the first time between the ages of 11 and 15, or grades 6 to 10.²

Families play a key role in keeping youth tobacco free. If young people know their parents disapprove of them using tobacco, they're less likely to do it—even if their parents use tobacco.³ Teens don't want to let their families down.⁴ This includes you.

Let your grandchild know that you want him or her to be tobacco free.

What You'll Find in This Booklet

You know the best way to talk to your grandchild. The goal of this booklet is to provide you with some extra help for talking about not using tobacco. It includes:

- information about why and when adolescents use tobacco
- tips for talking about the topic
- facts about tobacco use you can share with your grandchild
- suggestions to help your grandchild deal with peer pressure
- questions you can ask your grandchild



Use this booklet to keep the conversation going and help your grandchild make the decision to be tobacco free now and in the future. This booklet was developed by Lifetime Learning Systems, Inc. and funded by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company.



Understanding Youth and Tobacco Use

When you see teens smoking cigarettes or using smokeless tobacco, you may think about your own grandchild. The good news is that most young people do not use tobacco. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't be concerned about it. Some adolescents are curious and think about it. Some try it and then stop. Others become regular, daily users and are addicted. Understanding what influences adolescents when it comes to tobacco might help you talk to your grandchild about it.

When you see teens smoking cigarettes or using smokeless

Why Young People Say “No” to Tobacco

For most adolescents, it's an easy decision—they want to be tobacco free. What else influences young people to stay away from tobacco? Here are a few reasons:⁵

- knowing their parents disapprove
- concerns about the health risks, which range from not being able to breathe well enough to play sports to cancer and strokes
- having friends who are tobacco free
- knowing how to say “no”

Why Adolescents Try or Use Tobacco

There are many reasons young people try tobacco or start using it regularly, including: ^{2,5,6}

- having parents, friends, peers, or siblings who use tobacco
- overestimating the number of people who use tobacco
- wanting to bond with peers who use tobacco, or thinking it's a way to get a particular group to like them
- linking smoking with a particular social image or being "grown-up"
- having low self-esteem
- not knowing how to say "no" if friends offer them tobacco
- not doing well in school or not being involved with school activities
- underestimating the health consequences of using tobacco
- not understanding addiction and how tough it is to quit
- lacking parental support as they face the challenges of growing up

Did You Know?

According to the CDC:

- 8% of middle-schoolers in the U.S. are current cigarette smokers.⁷ The number nearly triples to about 22% in high school.⁸ (Current is defined as having smoked on one or more days in the 30 days preceding the survey.)
- 4% of middle-school boys in the U.S. are current smokeless tobacco users. The number more than doubles in high school to 10%.⁷
- Tobacco is often the first drug used by young people who use alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs.⁵
- Each year, cigarette smoking is responsible for approximately 438,000 deaths in the U.S.¹

Help keep your grandchild from being a statistic.

Talk to him or her about not using tobacco.

See the next sections for ideas on how to bring up the topic and what to cover when you talk.

You're Ready To Talk

You know it's important to talk to your grandchild about tobacco use. So, how do you bring up the topic?

The Opening

To start the conversation, try these:

- Ask what your grandchild is learning in school. Start by saying, "Your mom/dad tells me you've been talking about tobacco use in school. Why do you think the school has your class talking about this?"
- Empower your grandchild to teach you what he or she has learned. "Tell me about some of the information you've learned in school about tobacco use. What do you think about what you've learned?"
- Use a real example. If you both see young people smoking, try, "Do you see a lot of kids around your school smoking? What do you think about that?"
- Create an opportunity. For example, if your grandchild plays on a sports team, say, "What would you think if one of your teammates used tobacco? How do you think it would affect his or her performance? How would it impact the team?"
- Talk about a celebrity/athlete your grandchild likes. Try, "I saw that actor/athlete you like in a movie/game the other night. What do you like about him/her? What would you think if he/she used tobacco?" Encourage your grandchild to see the positive traits he or she likes about the actor/athlete that don't involve tobacco.

Tips for Talking

You know what approach will work best. Use these tips if you need additional help talking about tobacco use:

- Talk to your grandchild's parents. Find out what they've discussed with your grandchild before you talk. Reinforce the same messages.
- Spend time together so you know what's going on in your grandchild's life. Show your interest. This will help keep the communication lines open.
- Take cues from your grandchild about when it's a good time to talk one-on-one.
- Focus on the conversation and avoid distractions.
- Make it a two-way conversation. Talk, don't lecture.
- Share information and talk about your own experiences.



- Listen and respect your grandchild's opinions, feelings, and concerns. Ask follow-up questions to show you're listening.
- Praise your grandchild for things he or she does well and for good decisions, like being tobacco free. Let your grandchild know you've noticed.
- Be clear. Tell your grandchild you don't want him or her to use tobacco.

Let your grandchild know that you care about him or her and that you're there if he or she wants to talk. Because you have a special bond, your grandchild may find it easier to talk to you about important topics like tobacco use.

If You Use Tobacco...

Talking about not using tobacco may be more of a challenge. If you want your grandchild to be tobacco free, say so! Your grandchild needs to hear the message. Better yet, set an example. Show your grandchild what you expect by quitting.

If Your Grandchild Has a Parent Who Uses Tobacco...

Your grandchild may be concerned. Listen to these concerns. Then talk to the parent separately about these concerns and encourage him or her to quit—it will be better for everyone. When parents quit smoking, their children are less likely to start.⁹

Check Back In

As your grandchild gets older, he or she will experience new pressures and may have more friends who use tobacco. From time to time, bring up the topic and remind your grandchild that you want him or her to be tobacco free.

The Next Steps: Sharing the Facts and Your Experiences

Understanding the facts about tobacco use could influence your grandchild's decision to be tobacco free.

Not Everybody Does It!

Adolescents tend to think the number of people who use tobacco is higher than it is. In reality:

- 92% of middle-school kids DO NOT smoke cigarettes.⁷
- 96% of middle-school boys DO NOT use smokeless tobacco.⁷
- Over 80% of the adults in the U.S. DO NOT smoke cigarettes.¹⁰

Putting Their Health at Risk

- Your grandchild probably knows tobacco use has serious health consequences, like cancer, heart disease, and strokes.¹¹ But does he or she think these issues only affect older people who have used tobacco for a long time? Make sure your grandchild knows young people can suffer from health consequences, too.
- Young people who smoke can experience breathing issues, chronic coughing, wheezing, and impaired lung growth. They're also likely to be less physically fit than non-smokers.⁵
- Teen smokers are more likely to have panic attacks, anxiety disorders, and depression than their tobacco-free friends.¹²
- No tobacco product has been shown to be safe. Smokeless tobacco can cause cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, and esophagus—even in very young users.¹³

Suffering from any of these problems would make activities like playing soccer, baseball, singing, or many other things your grandchild enjoys difficult or even impossible!

If you have personal stories about friends or family who have suffered from tobacco-related health consequences, share them. Hearing true stories may help your grandchild better understand that the risks are serious and real.

Addiction Affects Adolescents

Does your grandchild know that “most young people who smoke regularly are already addicted to nicotine,” and when they try to quit, they experience withdrawal symptoms similar to adults?⁵ Smokeless tobacco use is also as addictive for young people as it is for adults.⁵

What are the withdrawal symptoms? When people who are addicted to nicotine stop smoking, they may suffer from restlessness, hunger, depression, headaches, and other uncomfortable feelings.¹³ If your grandchild doesn't want to deal with this, tell him or her that the solution is simple: Don't start.

Keeping Up a Social Image

Image is important to a lot of adolescents. Tobacco use can cause stained teeth, bad breath, mouth sores, wrinkles, and smelly hair and clothes.^{13,14} How would these issues affect your grandchild's image? Share this: One survey reported that 65% of teens strongly dislike being around smokers, and 86% would rather date non-smokers.¹⁵

If You Use Tobacco...

Tell your grandchild about your own experiences. If you wish you had never started, say so and explain why. Have you faced any health consequences because of tobacco? If you've quit or tried to, talk about it. What did you go through? Was it easy or difficult? What did you realize? What do you wish your parents or grandparents had told you about tobacco use when you were your grandchild's age? Help your grandchild understand the reality.





Pressure From Peers

You've been a teen and raised a teen, so you know how important friends are or will become to your grandchild during adolescence. And as adolescents get older, their peers have a stronger influence on them—including influence over decisions about tobacco use. How?

- Some young people tease or pressure their friends into trying tobacco. Young people who don't know how to say "no" can give in to the pressure.
- Sometimes just being around other young people who use tobacco is enough to get a child or teen started. They start because they feel like they have to in order to fit in.

The more friends a young person has who use tobacco, the greater the chances are that he or she will join them.¹⁶ Ask your grandchild about his or her friends. Get to know them if possible.

Tips for Saying “No”

Help your grandchild practice saying “no” to tobacco. Try these tips or others you come up with together.

Say “No” and...

- **suggest something else.** *(No thanks. Let’s go to the park instead.)*
- **talk about the consequences.** *(No thanks. Smoking can affect my breathing.)*
- **give a reason or explain why you said “no.”** *(I’m not interested. I want to be able to play basketball without having to stop for breath when I run down the court.)*
- **reverse the pressure.** *(No thanks. Why are you using tobacco? I thought you like being part of the popular group. Non-smokers are in the majority.)*
- **change the subject.** *(No thanks. Are you ready for the science test tomorrow?)*
- **add some humor.** *(No thanks. Kids don’t want to date smokers and I really need a date for the dance.)*
- **walk away.** *(No thanks.)*

Ask Your Grandchild...

If your grandchild is doing more listening during your chat than talking, try asking some of these questions to find out what he or she thinks about tobacco use. Share information you’ve read in this booklet during your discussion.

- Why are your friends tobacco free? Do you ever talk about it?
- Why do you think some young people start smoking? (If your grandchild says they do it because they think they look cool, remind him or her of the health consequences. Also, remind your grandchild that most people don’t smoke.)
- What do you think is cool?
- What do you think when you see kids your age using tobacco?
- What’s important to you? How would using tobacco affect that?
- How do you think I’d feel if you started using tobacco? (Make sure your grandchild knows you would be disappointed.)



Footnotes and Resources

There are additional organizations and resources that

can provide information on these and other lifestyle behaviors.

The listing in this booklet does not imply that the organization endorses the information contained herein, nor does it constitute an endorsement of the organization or resources by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company.

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