

## The Truth about Tobacco

**Slang -- Cigarettes: Smokes, Cigs, Butts. Smokeless Tobacco: Chew, Dip, Spit Tobacco, Snuff**

**Tobacco damages your health.** Smoking is the most common cause of lung cancer. Smoking is also a leading cause of cancer of the mouth, throat, bladder, pancreas, and kidney. Smokeless tobacco can cause mouth cancer, tooth loss, and other health problems.

**Tobacco affects your body's development.** Smoking is particularly harmful for teens because your body is still growing and changing. The 200 known poisons in cigarette smoke affect your normal development and can cause life-threatening diseases, such as chronic bronchitis, heart disease, and stroke.

**Tobacco is addictive.** Cigarettes contain nicotine-a powerfully addictive substance. Three-quarters of young people who use tobacco daily continue to do so because they find it hard to quit.

**Know the law.** It is illegal for anyone under 18 to buy cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, or tobacco-related products.

**Stay Informed.** Addiction to tobacco is hard to control. More than 90 percent of teens who use tobacco daily experience at least one symptom of withdrawal when they try to quit.

**Keep your edge.** The poisons in cigarettes can affect your appearance. Smoking can dry your skin out and cause wrinkles. Some research even relates smoking to premature gray hair and hair loss.

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# THE DEAF TEEN CHALLENGES ON TOBACCO AND ALCOHOL



**ORANGE COUNTY  
DEAF  
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CENTER**

**Be aware.** It can be hard to play sports if you use tobacco. Smoking causes shortness of breath and dizziness, and chewing tobacco causes dehydration.

**Think of others.** Smoking puts the health of your friends and family at risk. Approximately 3,000 nonsmokers die of lung cancer each year from breathing other peoples' smoke.

**Get the facts.** Each day more than 3,000 people under age 18 become regular smokers. That's more than 1 million teens per year. Roughly one-third of them will eventually die from a tobacco-related disease.

**Look around you.** Even though a lot of teens use tobacco, most don't. According to a 1998 study, less than 20 percent of teens are regular smokers. In fact, 64 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds have never even tried a cigarette.

**How can you tell if a friend is using tobacco?** Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following signs, he or she may be regularly using tobacco:

- Wheezing
- Coughing
- Bad breath
- Smelly hair and clothes
- Yellow-stained teeth and fingers
- Frequent colds
- Decreased senses of smell and taste
- Difficulty keeping up with sports and athletic activities
- Bleeding gums (smokeless tobacco)
- Frequent mouth sores (smokeless tobacco)

## The Truth about Alcohol

### Slang--Booze, Sauce, Brews, Brewskis, Hooch, Hard Stuff, Juice

**Alcohol affects your brain.** Drinking alcohol leads to a loss of coordination, poor judgment, slowed reflexes, distorted vision, memory lapses, and even blackouts.

**Alcohol affects your body.** Alcohol can damage every organ in your body. It is absorbed directly into your bloodstream and can increase your risk for a variety of life-threatening diseases, including cancer.

**Alcohol affects your self-control.** Alcohol depresses your central nervous system, lowers your inhibitions, and impairs your judgment. Drinking can lead to risky behaviors, including having unprotected sex. This may expose you to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases or cause unwanted pregnancy.

**Alcohol can kill you.** Drinking large amounts of alcohol can lead to coma or even death. Also, in 1998, 35.8 percent of traffic deaths of 15- to 20-year-olds were alcohol-related.

**Alcohol can hurt you--even if you're not the one drinking.** If you're around people who are drinking, you have an increased risk of being seriously injured, involved in car crashes, or affected by violence. At the very least, you may have to deal with people who are sick, out of control, or unable to take care of themselves.

**Know the law.** It is illegal to buy or possess alcohol if you are under 21.

**Get the facts.** One drink can make you fail a breath test. In some states, people under the age of 21 who are found to have any amount of alcohol in their systems can lose their

driver's license, be subject to a heavy fine, or have their car permanently taken away.

**Stay informed.** "Binge" drinking means having five or more drinks on one occasion. About 15 percent of teens are binge drinkers in any given month.

**Know the risks.** Mixing alcohol with medications or illicit drugs is extremely dangerous and can lead to accidental death. For example, alcohol-medication interactions may be a factor in at least 25 percent of emergency room admissions.

**Keep your edge.** Alcohol can make you gain weight and give you bad breath.

**Look around you.** Most teens aren't drinking alcohol. Research shows that 70 percent of people 12-20 haven't had a drink in the past month.

**How can you tell if a friend has a drinking problem?** Sometimes it's tough to tell. But there are signs you can look for. If your friend has one or more of the following warning signs, he or she may have a problem with alcohol:

- Getting drunk on a regular basis
- Lying about how much alcohol he or she is using
- Believing that alcohol is necessary to have fun
- Having frequent hangovers
- Feeling run-down, depressed, or even suicidal
- Having "blackouts"--forgetting what he or she did while drinking
- Having problems at school or getting in trouble with the law