

## What Should I Do if my Child Already Smokes?

Remember that quitting any habit is difficult. Here you have the added possibility of addiction to nicotine. How can I, as a parent, be clear on my stance, but also be supportive? I don't want to drive my child's use of tobacco underground and be in the dark about what and how much my child is using. What has had some success is the use of motivational interviewing.

First, does your child even recognize their use of tobacco as a problem? In your discussions, this may be one of your greatest obstacles to overcome. Engaging your child in conversation and education may help. We know that most students don't believe they will become addicted. They believe they will stop smoking before they encounter the physical consequences. Those two perceptions are incorrect. The more you know about tobacco and its consequences on children, the better you can educate them on their misconceptions.

Many children do know that the use of tobacco is something they want to give up, but they have some ambivalence around the issue. It helps to have them list, with your assistance, the pros and cons to increase their awareness of the risks and consequences. Hopefully, they will be shifted more toward the reasons to quit.

The next thing your children will need is a plan. There are plenty of programs available to assist you and your children in these efforts. With your help, they will need to decide which program meets their needs and is in close proximity to you. Some schools offer smoking cessation programs. Don't forget to check this out. Once the decision is made comes the next step, action.

This is a step where your child actually takes a step. This is an active process that involves following through with the plan. Whatever mentors, contracts or other support system are needed, they should be employed.

A new habit takes time to be fully engrained. It is always possible to return to old habits. Because of that tendency, it is important to monitor your children and to help them self-monitor. It may be necessary to repeat steps when faltering.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention also has guidelines for parent to help their children quit the use of tobacco. Use whatever works best with your children. This is a habit that can be overcome.

For more information, contact:

**TobaccoFreeAllegheny**

[www.tobaccofreeallegheny.org](http://www.tobaccofreeallegheny.org)

412-322-8321