



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Health



# Brush Up on Oral Health

February 2015

Did You Know?

- **Smoking and Health**
- **Smoking-Related Health Problems**
- **Strategies to Help Pregnant Women and Parents Quit Smoking**
- **Electronic Cigarettes and Liquid Nicotine**
- **Cook's Corner: Veggie Rainbow**

- Smoking can harm nearly every organ in the body.
- Almost one in five deaths in the United States are related to smoking.
- It is never too late to stop smoking to improve health.
- A pack-a-day smoker will save nearly \$2,000 a year by quitting.

## Smoking and Health

Not smoking or quitting smoking is an important way to stay healthy and live longer. When someone quits smoking, it also improves the health and quality of life of those around the person, especially young children.



This issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* describes some smoking-related health problems that affect parents, pregnant women, and children. The issue also offers tips Head Start staff can use to help parents, pregnant women, and Head Start staff quit smoking. A recipe for a healthy snack that can be made in the Head Start classroom or at home is also included.

## Smoking-Related Health Problems

Smoking can cause health problems for parents, pregnant women and their babies, and children. Problems include:

- **Chronic diseases and illnesses.** Smoking can cause cancer almost anywhere in the body. It can lead to heart attacks, stroke, and lung disease. Smoking also makes diabetes harder to control.
- **Poor birth outcomes.** Smoking can affect the placenta, the organ that feeds the developing baby. Problems with the placenta increase a woman's chance of having a miscarriage, stillbirth, or premature delivery. It also increases the woman's chance of having a baby with low birthweight.

- **Birth defects.** Women who smoke during pregnancy have higher rates of delivering a baby with a cleft palate.
- **Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.** Babies of pregnant women who smoke are more likely to die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Babies who breathe secondhand smoke are also more likely to die from SIDS.
- **Breathing problems.** Breathing secondhand smoke can cause infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia, as well as wheezing and coughing. Secondhand smoke can also trigger attacks in children with asthma.
- **Oral health issues.** In addition to causing bad breath and stained teeth, smoking increases the risk of oral cancer, gum disease, and delayed healing after a tooth extraction and other oral surgery.

Other health-related problems caused by smoking are discussed in *A Report of the Surgeon General: How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease—What it Means to You*. The resource is available in [English](#) and in [Spanish \(español\)](#).

## Strategies to Help Parents and Pregnant Women Quit Smoking



- **Help families fill out the [Head Start Family Smoking Survey](#).** Fill out the survey with each family to see if the child is exposed to smoking in the home or the car. Getting this information is the first step in helping families who smoke in the home or the car set no smoking rules and in helping them create a quit smoking action plan.
- **Establish a program-based quit smoking initiative.** The American Legacy Foundation's [Head Start Tobacco Cessation Initiative: Partnering for Healthier Children and Families](#) provides a framework for setting up and running a quit smoking program in Head Start settings.
- **Use motivational interviewing.** Use motivational interviewing to share information about the dangers of smoking and assess parents' willingness to quit smoking. See the [November 2014](#) issue of *Brush Up on Oral Health* for more information about motivational interviewing.
- **Share methods to quit smoking.** Smokefree.gov's [Quit Method](#) and [BeTobaccoFree.gov](#) webpages describe different methods for quitting smoking. They also describe which methods are most effective, which are most affordable, and which can be started immediately. One method featured on the Quit Method webpage is telephone counseling and support services. By calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669), individuals will be connected to their state quitline to talk to trained coaches.
- **Maintain non-smoking policies.** Develop and enforce written policies to prevent anyone from smoking on Head Start program sites.

## Electronic Cigarettes and Liquid Nicotine

Electronic cigarettes, also called e-cigarettes, e-cigs, or smokeless cigarettes, look like cigarettes, cigars, or pipes. They contain a small, battery-powered heater that changes liquid nicotine into a mist or vapor, which the user inhales. E-cigarettes are not regulated by the [Food and Drug Administration](#). It has been found that e-cigarette users are inhaling formaldehyde, a chemical known to cause cancer. Also, using e-cigarettes does not end a smoker's addiction to nicotine. People who stop using e-cigarettes often go back to smoking traditional cigarettes.

Poison control centers report sharp increases in the number of young children drinking liquid nicotine. Children are drawn to the packages' bright colors and to the liquid nicotine's flavors, such as cherry, chocolate, and bubble gum. Drinking any amount of liquid nicotine can cause vomiting, seizures, or death.

## Cook's Corner: Veggie Rainbow

Here's a delicious, healthy snack that children can make as a class project or at home with their families.



### Ingredients

One red, one green, one yellow, and one orange bell pepper, sliced into thin strips  
One head cauliflower, cut into bite-size pieces  
One cup low-fat ranch dressing

### Directions

1. Arrange one slice of each colored pepper strip onto a plate or in a bowl to form a rainbow.
2. Place one piece of cauliflower on each side of the rainbow to form a cloud.
3. Spoon one tablespoon of ranch dressing onto the plate or bowl for dipping.

**Safety tip:** An adult should slice ingredients.

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***School readiness begins with health!***