

Dear Parent or Guardian,

One of the greatest threats to teen health is tobacco. Smoking is the single most preventable cause of early death. Approximately 450,000 people—almost twice as many males as females—die each year from tobacco related diseases. Over 15 percent of middle school students and over 34 percent of high school students use tobacco products; about 3,000 teens start using tobacco every day. In health class, we will be examining the effects of tobacco products on the body. We will explore tobacco's harmful physical effects and the social pressures that influence teens to smoke. We will also discuss methods by which teens can avoid tobacco use.

Some questions your teen will explore in this chapter include: *What are the harmful substances in tobacco? How does tobacco affect the breathing process? How does tobacco affect other parts of the body? What are the long-term effects of tobacco use? What are the benefits of a tobacco-free lifestyle? What are some strategies for preventing tobacco use? Why do some teens use tobacco? What are the effects of smoke on nonsmokers? What can society do to limit risks related to smoking?*

Please reinforce our classroom work by discussing with your son or daughter one or more of the following topics:

- Discuss with your teen any questions or concerns he or she may have about tobacco use. Share information as to its short and long term negative effects.
- If you are a nonsmoker, share with your teen your reasons for making this choice. If you smoke, share the reasons you started and discuss the effects it has had on you life.
- Encourage your teen to share the reasons they believe some teens feel compelled to use tobacco and reinforce ways teenagers can avoid the trap of using tobacco products. Discuss methods to overcome peer pressure.
- Share strategies for your teen to defend his or her right to a smoke free environment.
- If your teen does use tobacco, encourage him or her to join a cessation program.

By stressing the consequences of tobacco use and the benefits of remaining tobacco-free, I hope we can work together to convince your child to remain or become tobacco-free. Thank you for supporting our classroom work. Feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss your teen's health.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher