

Information for Parents

In class today, your child participated in Tar Wars, a tobacco-free education program from the American Academy of Family Physicians. Tar Wars is designed for fourth- and fifth-grade students and is presented by volunteer health care professionals and educators. The program consists of two components: a one-hour classroom presentation and a follow-up poster contest.

During the classroom presentation, your child participated in the six activities listed below. Tar Wars urges you to discuss these activities with your child and ask them what they learned.

Activity 1 – Short-Term Effects of Tobacco Use

Increases students' knowledge of the short-term effects of using tobacco products (i.e., zoo breath, stinky clothes, yellow teeth).

Activity 2 – Straw/Breathing Exercise

Demonstrates how smoking decreases lung volume.

Activity 3 – Financial Implications of Tobacco Use

Illustrates the cost of tobacco use over the course of one day, month, and year.

Activity 4 – Reasons People Use Tobacco

Helps students identify and understand the reasons people begin or continue to use tobacco products.

Activity 5 – Tobacco and Advertising

Increases students' knowledge of how the tobacco industry uses advertising to influence youth to buy their products and how to think critically about tobacco advertising.

Activity 6 – Poster Contest

Reinforces the Tar Wars lesson and emphasizes the positive effects of being tobacco-free through original poster designs. You may want to ask your child's teacher about the school's poster contest entry deadlines and prizes to be awarded.

Stats You Need to Know

Did you know that

- Approximately 90 percent of all tobacco users started at or before the age of 18?
- Each day, more than 4,000 children try their first cigarette and another 1,500 become new regular, daily smokers?
- Children are twice as likely as adults to recall tobacco advertising?
- More than five million children alive today will die prematurely from smoking-related illnesses?

How Can Parents Protect Their Children From Smoking?

- Be tobacco-free role models.
- Maintain a smoke-free home.
- Don't start smoking. If you do, then quit.
- Take an active interest in your child's social life: be aware of who your child hangs out with and if they smoke.

To remain tobacco-free, your child will need a clear, no-use message, factual information, and a strong will to resist peer pressures. Teach your children to be aware of how tobacco and other drugs are promoted in the media, through music and television, and other communication vehicles. Continue to practice with your child how to say "no" and refuse tobacco. Your children will appreciate the interest you show in their health and well-being.

Take the Tobacco-Free Pledge

Children take promises very seriously. Ask your child to commit to being tobacco-free by entering into a contract with them. Consider using an incentive (i.e., money, a special trip) to reward them for remaining tobacco-free until the age of 21.

Facts About Secondhand Smoke (SHS)

Secondhand smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, and at least 50 of those are known to cause cancer. Babies and children who breathe secondhand smoke suffer from increased incidences of

- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)
- Childhood asthma
- Bronchitis, pneumonia, wheezing and coughing spells, ear infections, and frequent and more severe asthma attacks

How Can Parents Protect Their Children From Secondhand Smoke?

- Don't allow smoking in the home.
- Don't smoke while holding a child or when near a child.
- Don't allow smoking in the car.
- Insist on being seated in the non-smoking section of restaurants and other public places.
- Don't allow caregivers to smoke around your children or in your home.
- Take the Smoke-Free Home Pledge

For more information on the Smoke-Free Home Pledge, call the toll-free hotline at 800-513-1157 or go to www.epa.gov/smokefree/pledge/index.html.

If You Smoke or Know Someone Who Does

Are you thinking about quitting smoking or know someone who is? Call the National Network of Quitlines at 800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669) to receive **FREE** information and help. For additional tobacco prevention and cessation resources, go to

- www.askandact.org
- www.familydoctor.org (search for "smoking")
- www.smokefree.gov
- www.lung.org (access their free online program, Freedom from Smoking)
- www.ctcinfo.org
- www.tobaccofreekids.org

For more information about Tar Wars, go to www.tarwars.org. To contact Tar Wars staff, please call 800-TAR-WARS or send an email to tarwars@aafp.org.



American Academy
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A tobacco-free education program for kids from
the American Academy of Family Physicians

*Tar Wars is supported in part by a grant from
the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation.*