

# Talking to your Children about Smoking

## Tobacco Use Isn't Just About Cigarettes

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Thinking about talking to your children about smoking? It's a great idea and sounds simple enough. But how many parents actively discuss the harmful effects and consequences of tobacco use on a regular basis and as a family? While this topic isn't being discussed in the home, tobacco companies are using a variety of tactics and ploys to gain your child or youth as their future customer. This ensures that they are replacing smokers who can no longer smoke due to chronic illness and life-threatening illnesses.

Cigarette smoking single handedly causes heart disease, respiratory illnesses and a variety of cancers, yet it is a health topic that can take a back seat to home discussions around drugs, alcohol or even sexual health. And, tobacco use isn't just about cigarettes anymore. There are a number of trends affecting youth. This landscape is changing and parents need an awareness of electronic cigarettes and hookah. Experimenting with these can greatly influence whether or not your child or youth will try tobacco and/or become an established smoker of cigarettes as an adult. Adults don't start smoking, children do (and at a very young age). According to the Exposer, about 60% of adult smokers begin before they are 14, and 85% before they are 16. The same source states that 12 kids become regular smokers every day in our Province.

### ***Electronic Cigarettes***

Electronic Cigarettes is a fairly new product to the market that has been increasing in popularity among young people. Its shape and size mimic cigarettes in terms of appearance, use and sometimes, taste, but have a critical difference – they don't contain tobacco. Health Canada does not permit these devices to be sold in the country if they contain nicotine, however many people still use them as an alternative to smoking. According to the 2015 Canadian Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Survey, 26% of Canadian youth aged 15-19 reported having tried an e-cigarette, up from 20% in 2013. This equates to about one in four youth aged 15-19 has ever tried one. There are many unknowns and there are no safe standards for safe levels of toxicants ingested into the lungs via vapor. The effects of frequent, long-term exposure must also be considered. Perhaps more importantly, many health professionals agree that e-cigarettes are a gateway to smoking cigarettes later in life. Since June 9, of 2016, the Newfoundland and Labrador Government have banned the sale and promotion of all vaping products to those under 19. The same restrictions include the promotion of flavors that appeal to youth such as candy. A display ban, and how e-cigarettes are advertised in stores that sell them is expect in July of 2017.

### ***Hookah***

Hookah has become a cause for concern in recent years, including Canada and in our Province. Also known as a water pipe, the increasing prevalence of hookah use is noteworthy among

post-secondary students and young people. Water pipes are typically composed of four parts: a bowl, a base which is filled with liquid, a rigid pipe through which smoke travels into the liquid and one or more hoses or mouthpieces. Moist flavored tobacco and/or herbal mixes, (and currently does not fall under any regulation) are used. It's seen as a social activity that is safer than smoking cigarettes, however, according to the Non-Smoker's Rights Association, a typical hookah session that uses tobacco can last 20-80 minutes, with smoker's taking up to 200 puffs. This is in contrast to 5-7 minutes and 8-12 puffs taken for a cigarette. The science on hookah smoking and second hand smoke is still emerging as it is widely agreed upon that inhaling tobacco or herbal mixes into the lungs is harmful. Sharing the hoses of a water pipe also pose a public health concern as they can spread infectious diseases. By July 2017, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will have legislation in place that prohibits hookah from being smoked indoors which will affect hookah shops and stores.

National Non-Smoking Week is January 15-21, 2017. Take this time to start a conversation with your children about the harmful effects and consequences of smoking cigarettes, electronic cigarettes and hookah.

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