

# Activity Supplement

## Anti-Smoking Awareness for Girls

After the disturbing news in February this year that the number of women dying from lung cancer in Ireland has increased by 3% and now exceeds the number dying from breast cancer (*The National Cancer Registry*), the health risks to girls who start smoking in their teenage years are now more serious than ever.



Picture from X-Hale Youth Awards 2011

While teenage girls may know smoking isn't healthy, they may be unaware of just how dangerous it actually is. This activity supplement can help teach teenage girls about some of these dangers and raise their awareness around the issue of smoking. While it is targeted towards working with girls it can also be used with boys.

### Smoking Facts in Ireland

Begin the session by introducing the topic of smoking and list the following hard facts regarding tobacco and cigarette use.

Each year in Ireland smoking causes approximately **7,000** deaths.

Around **30%** of all cancer deaths in Ireland are attributed to smoking.

**90%** of lung cancers are caused by smoking.

It costs the State **€1 billion** per year to provide health services to smokers.

People are usually **under the age of 18** when they become addicted to nicotine.

By 2030 tobacco will be the single biggest cause of death worldwide, accounting for about **10 million** deaths per year.

Tobacco is one of the greatest causes of preventable and premature deaths in human history.

A non-smoker living with a smoker has a **25%** increased risk of lung cancer and a **30%** increased risk of heart disease.

*Source: Department of Health & [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)*

### Activity 1 Smoking Simulation

**Aim:** This simple and fun experiment demonstrates the effects of smoking and is suitable for any age group.

**Materials:** Plastic bottle, cotton wool, Play-Doh and a cigarette.

- Put some cotton wool into a small plastic bottle so that the cotton wool is at the bottom.
- Stuff the top of the bottle with Play-Doh and create a hole large enough to fit a cigarette.
- Place the lighted cigarette through the hole and squeeze the bottle so that the air pressure simulates breathing or sucking smoke into the bottle.
- After a few minutes, remove the cigarette and examine the cotton ball.

#### Follow Up

Discuss what has happened to the cotton wool.

Discuss the physical dangers of smoking.

Divide the group in half, with one group taking the pro-side and the other the con-side of smoking.

Debate whether or not it should be illegal for anyone under 18 to buy or use tobacco items.

Ask the girls to make original anti-smoking adverts and posters and create a display in the youth club.

[www.ehow.com/list\\_6525743\\_classroom-activities-drug-awareness.html#ixzz1n0i2IMGU](http://www.ehow.com/list_6525743_classroom-activities-drug-awareness.html#ixzz1n0i2IMGU)

“Giving up smoking is the easiest thing in the world. I know because I've done it thousands of times.”

Mark Twain

## Activity 2

### Saying No to Smoking

**Aim:** To look at how peer-pressure causes teenage girls to start smoking in the first place and to equip them with a response should they come under pressure to smoke.

**Background:** If a friend has ever pushed you into doing something you don't want to do, then you've experienced *peer-pressure*. This is how many young girls start smoking. If a popular girl offers you a cigarette, you might think that you will become popular if you do what she says. When a close friend starts smoking, you may worry that you'll lose the friendship if you turn her down.

There are many ways to handle peer-pressure. First, remember these two things:

You **don't have** to do anything that you don't want to do.

It is perfectly **okay to say no** - You don't owe anyone an explanation.

But let's face it, saying "no" isn't always easy. Most of us worry about fitting in and what others will think of us. But if you're worried that you'll lose your friend over a peer-pressure situation, you may want to take a closer look at the friendship! A true friend will respect your decisions, and someone who dumps you for not taking orders from them was never a friend to begin with. Also you may discover that some of your other friends secretly feel the same way you do!

**If a friend tries to pressure you, keep in mind why she might be doing it:**

She may be trying to make you feel small, so that she can feel better about herself. You don't need her approval to feel good about yourself.

She may be afraid of anyone who is different from her. You can listen to what she has to say, but you don't have to agree with her.

She could be afraid of criticism, so she'll do the criticising first. It's better to be alone than to be with someone who is rude to you all the time.

She could be making up rules so that she fits and you don't. Know that there are people who will appreciate you for who you are. Seek them out.

If a simple "No, thanks" won't do the trick, here are some other tactics for turning down someone who offers you a cigarette:

"I'm allergic to smoke."

"The smell of smoke makes me sick and I don't want to smell like that."

"My parents will go mad if I come home smelling like smoke."

"I know someone who died of cancer from smoking and I don't want to do it."

"I don't want to start because I'm trying to get my parents to give up."

"No thanks, I gave up."

Whatever you choose, do what feels right for you. Remember: most young people don't smoke, so you're in good company! If someone won't stop pressuring you, it's okay to call for backup. Talk to an adult you trust, like your teacher, parents, or an older brother or sister.

<http://pbskids.org/itsmylife/body/smoking/article4.html>



## Activity 3

### Short-Term Effects of Smoking

**Aim:** To increase teenage girl's knowledge of the short-term effects of tobacco use.

**Materials:** Flip chart paper and pens.

Ask the girls what they think happens to a person when they use tobacco for a short time.

Make a column on the paper with the title "Short-term Effects."

Possible responses include:

- Bad breath
- Difficulty running and breathing
- Smelly clothes and hair
- Yellow teeth and fingers
- Coughing
- Less money to spend on other things
- Messy ashes and butt litter

Ask the girls to make up posters with images from magazines and include the responses they came up with on large flip chart paper and stick them around the youth club.

[www.lafp.org/content/images/stories/Foundation/2011%20-%202012%20Tar%20Wars/Activities.pdf](http://www.lafp.org/content/images/stories/Foundation/2011%20-%202012%20Tar%20Wars/Activities.pdf)

## Activity 4 Is Smoking Worth it?

**Aim:** To make the girls aware of the cost of smoking – remind them that as tobacco is addictive, once a person starts to smoke they will find it very hard to give up and generally people increase the amount they smoke over time.

**Materials:** Flip chart paper and pens.

The cost of a pack of 20 cigarettes in Ireland is approximately €9.00.

On the flip chart paper ask the girls to calculate the cost of smoking a pack a day on a weekly, monthly, and yearly basis. Write these amounts on the flip chart paper - based on someone smoking a pack a day the cost would be:

Daily cost	€9
Weekly cost	€63
Monthly Cost	€270
Yearly Cost	€3285

Now ask the girls to think about what other things they could buy with this money and make a list of these things.

Reiterate the question - Is smoking worth it?

<http://www.lafp.org/content/images/stories/Foundation/2011%20-%202012%20Tar%20Wars/Activities.pdf>



Arlene Dowling, Ciara Clarke and Deanne Gill,  
Newbridge Youth Project - Stomp the Butts  
Festival, 2011

## Activity 5 Why Do Young People Start Smoking?

**Aim:** To identify and understand the reasons young people take up smoking in the first place and to dispel the myths around smoking.

**Materials:** Flip chart paper and pens.

Ask the girls why they or their friends start to smoke in the first place. Write the responses on the flip chart paper. Encourage them to include some of the following reasons and then counter the reason with facts!

### Image

Teens smoke because they imagine smokers to be glamorous, beautiful, trendy, popular, sophisticated, and always having fun.

### Fact

Apart from the health risks, smoking is not seen as 'cool' any more. It is banned in so many places these days that it can be hard to find somewhere to hang out with your friends if you smoke.

### To Be Thin and More Attractive

Many teenage girls may think that smoking will curb their appetite and help them lose weight and look slim.

### Fact

What's the point in being thin if smoking turns your teeth and fingers yellow, prematurely ages your skin and gives you a dull complexion?. These characteristics are unattractive!

## Peer Pressure

Some people indicate their reason for smoking is because of pressure to be liked and to please their friends who smoke.

### Fact

As smokers are still in the minority, there are other friends who they can hang around with who don't smoke. Smoking makes your hair, clothes and breath smell. Smokers get so used to the smell of stale cigarette smoke, that they don't notice it after a while. Do the girls want to be part of a group like this?

## Nicotine Addiction/Relaxation

People who smoke claim it is relaxing, when it actually has the opposite effect. People feel relaxed when they smoke because smoking feeds them the nicotine their brain is craving. They become addicted to nicotine, which is a drug.

### Fact:

Tobacco is a stimulant, it speeds up the heart rate, increases blood pressure, and revs up the body, so it is anything but relaxing

## Looking Older/Being Grown-up or Like Parents

One of the most dangerous ideas held by teenage girls is that smoking is an acceptable form of adult behavior and in a rush to grow up, they think smoking will make them appear more adult.

### Fact:

Smoking is very likely to kill you in the long run!!! Smoking makes you about 10 times more likely to die early from a major stroke or heart attack. Smokers suffer more frequently from severe bronchitis and emphysema. Is this the future teenage girls want for themselves?

<http://www.cyh.com/HealthTopics/HealthTopicDetails.aspx?p=240&np=158&id=2099>



## Activity 6

### How to Stop Smoking

If some of the teenage girls in your group have already taken up smoking the following are some ideas and things they can do to help them to give up.

#### Chewing Gum:

Chewing gum decreases the craving for a cigarette, by doing so they can reduce the feelings for smoking. This helps to decrease the smoking behavior in an individual for a short time.

#### Exercise:

One of the best way to reduce the craving for cigarettes is a good workout which could be as simple as walking, aerobics, jogging or riding a bike. This helps to not only decrease the cravings for nicotine but also helps to release endorphins, which give the body an overall sense of well being.

#### Music:

Learning to play a musical instrument is another positive way to avoid cigarette smoking. This anti-smoking activity helps to improve cognitive functioning and relieve stress.

#### Games:

Video games often serve to relieve the stress of an individual and they can also be effective as an anti- smoking activity. They can also help to improve hand eye coordination as well.

#### Hobbies:

Keep yourself busy with other activities like sports, studying, cooking, reading etc. This is an important way to reduce cravings for smoking, as these hobbies keep you busy in the leisure time. Try something that you have always wanted to do but never got a chance to do it.

*Source: [www.tobryanyoung.blogspot.com/2011/06/anti-smoking-activities.html](http://www.tobryanyoung.blogspot.com/2011/06/anti-smoking-activities.html)*

### Where to go next...

[www.quit.ie](http://www.quit.ie)  
[www.cancer.ie/exhale](http://www.cancer.ie/exhale)  
[www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)  
[www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie) (Dept. of Health)  
[www.irishhealth.com](http://www.irishhealth.com)  
[www.youthhealth.ie](http://www.youthhealth.ie)  
[www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie)  
[www.niforkids.com](http://www.niforkids.com)