



Coaches: You Can Influence Youth

Coaches are important role-models for youth. What you do and say about tobacco use impacts on how youth think about, and use tobacco. Studies show that when a coach uses tobacco, young players are more likely to believe that using tobacco is acceptable. When coaches and other sports leaders show that they support being tobacco-free, youth remember, and are more likely to feel positively towards being tobacco-free.

ALL YOUTH ARE AT RISK OF USING TOBACCO

Based on current (2009) youth smoking rates, on the average 16 member team of youth aged 10–17, two will be current smokers. The average age that grade 10–12 students reported having their first cigarette was 14.1 years.

KNOW THE FACTS ABOUT YOUTH AND TOBACCO USE

- Smoking slows lung growth in youth and adolescents, decreases lung function in late adolescence and reduces the oxygen available for muscles used in sports.
- Adolescent smokers report suffering from shortness of breath almost three times more often than non-smokers.
- Other tobacco products such as “chew” (spit tobacco), flavoured and unflavoured cigarillos, cigars, snuff or pipe tobacco are not safe alternatives to cigarettes.
- Tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death in Canada, causing heart and lung diseases, cancers and strokes.

TAKE A STAND – EARLY AND OFTEN

- Recognize your influence with young people. Don't use tobacco industry products around them, and remind participants frequently about the importance of being tobacco-free.
- When talking to players remember they relate more to messages about the immediate effects of tobacco use (such as poorer athletic performance) than to its long-term threats.
- Adopt and reinforce a tobacco-free policy for players, coaches, referees and spectators.
- Send a copy of the tobacco-free policy home for review.
- Challenge spectators to give their personal support to the players by respecting a tobacco-free zone.

