

## TOBACCO

According to the Connecticut Department of Public Health, approximately 75,000 Connecticut Middle and High school students use some form of tobacco. Nearly 1 in 3 Connecticut high school seniors smoke cigarettes. The average age of initiation for smoking cigarettes is 12 or lower. It's no wonder; our youth see unregulated tobacco ads on the Internet, an increase in actors smoking on television or in the movies and athletes using tobacco on television. While 2 out of 3 youth hear anti-smoking messages from parents, less than half are likely to hear anti-smoking messages from doctors and dentists.

Over 70% of current youth smokers believe that they can quit smoking if they want to, however statistics show that 19% of middle school and 23% of high school students have unsuccessfully attempted to quit 3 or more times. Nicotine, the drug in tobacco, is highly addictive, both psychologically and physically. It is both a stimulant and a sedative to the central nervous system. Nicotine absorbed by cigarette smoking takes only seconds to reach the brain. Effects of nicotine include: increase in blood pressure, increased heart rate, and increase in respiration, blockage of blood vessels, reduced effectiveness of immune system, bronchitis, and emphysema. Women of reproductive age can experience premature birth, low birth weight babies, greater chance of miscarriage or stillbirth, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and hyperactive babies.

Cigar smoking among Connecticut students has become increasingly popular. Approximately 6% of Connecticut middle school and 13% of high school students reported smoking at least one cigar within the past 30 days.

Smokeless tobacco use is popular with teenagers and increases each year. All forms of smokeless tobacco contain high concentrations of cancer causing agents. Users have an increased cancer risk not only of the oral cavity, but also the pharynx, larynx and the esophagus. Nicotine blood levels are similar to those from cigarette smoking. Nicotine addiction can lead to an artificially increased heart rate and blood pressure.

### Resources

Smoking cessation clinics- contact GLAD (Glastonbury Alcohol and Drug Counsel) at 860-416-4839 or [Betobaccofree@aol.com](mailto:Betobaccofree@aol.com)

CT Department of Public Health Tobacco Use Prevention and Control

[www.dph.state.ct.us/](http://www.dph.state.ct.us/)

Mobilize Against Tobacco for Children's Health

[www.MATCHcoalition.com](http://www.MATCHcoalition.com)

Source: Connecticut Youth Tobacco survey 2000