

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release.

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Getting Ready for the New School Year? Talk to Your Kids about Tobacco Use

Over the next couple of weeks young people in the Panhandle are heading back to school. In the flurry to get ready for the school year, parents may not be thinking about keeping their kids from using tobacco products, but the start of the school year is an excellent time to talk to kids about tobacco use.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) nearly 90% of smokers start smoking before they're 18. "Current adult smokers are more likely to report that they smoked their first cigarette before the age of 13," said Tabi Prochazka, Tobacco Free in the Panhandle Coordinator with Panhandle Public Health District.

"It's not too early to talk to your child. Addiction can lead to a lifetime of serious health problems. The best way for you to protect your child is to prevent tobacco use."

The youth smoking rate in 2013 was 11% but there is an increase in the use of e-cigarettes among students. E-cigarettes are an untested and unregulated product and contain varying amounts of tobacco-based nicotine or synthetic nicotine.

Youth nicotine use is unsafe whether in chewing tobacco, cigarettes or e-cigarettes.

- The adolescent brain is still developing. Nicotine use during adolescence can disrupt the formation of brain circuits that control attention, learning, and susceptibility to addiction.
- Poisonings have resulted among users and non-users due to ingestion of nicotine liquid, absorption through the skin, and inhalation. E-cigarette exposure calls to national poison centers increased from one per month in September 2010 to 215 per month in February 2014, and over half of those calls were regarding children ages 5 and under.
- According to the Surgeon General, the evidence is already sufficient to warn adolescents about the use of nicotine-containing products such as smokeless tobacco, dissolvables, and e-cigarettes.

To help keep your children from starting to use tobacco, take these important steps:

- Talk to your child about how dangerous smoking is – and how addictive all tobacco products are. Current student cigarette smokers whose parents had talked to them about not using tobacco during the past year (46%) were more likely to show their intent to stop smoking than current smokers whose parents had not talked to them about their tobacco use (36%).
- If you smoke, quit. Students who reported living with a cigarette smoker or smokeless tobacco user were more likely to use cigarettes or smokeless tobacco themselves.
- Know who your children's friends are. More than 84% of current student cigarette smokers reported at least one smoker among their closest friends.

Funding for Tobacco Free in the Panhandle is provided by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services/Tobacco Free Nebraska Program as a result of the Tobacco Master Settlement Agreement.

For additional information visit <http://www.pphd.org/tfn.html> or call Tabi Prochazka, Tobacco Free in the Panhandle Coordinator, at Panhandle Public Health District at 308-487-3600 ext 107 or toll free at 866-701-7173. Panhandle Public Health District is working together to improve the health, safety and quality of life for all who live, learn, work and play in the Panhandle. Our vision is that we are a healthier and safer Panhandle Community.

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