

You Smoke – But You Don't Want Your Kids to Start.

The best example you can set for your kids is to quit yourself. If you continue to smoke, it is *essential* that you talk to your kids about smoking. Kids whose parents smoke are more than twice as likely to begin smoking than kids whose parents don't smoke. Smoking can harm kids well before they reach adulthood by causing a number of immediate, sometimes irreversible, health risks and problems.

You may think as a parent "How can I lecture my kids about smoking when I smoke?" Seems hypocritical, right? Studies have shown that even parents who continue to smoke can effectively educate their children about the dangers of smoking.

What you can do (whether you smoke or not)

- **If you don't smoke, don't start! If you do smoke, quit!***
- **If you smoke, share your struggles to quit with your children.** Kids greatly underestimate how difficult it is to quit smoking.
- **Maintain a smoke-free home.** That means everybody, children and adults.
- **Tell your kids that you don't want them to smoke and will be disappointed if they do.** Parental attitudes, opinions, and feelings about their kids' smoking status greatly influence whether or not kids will smoke, even when the parents smoke.
- **Emphasize the effects of smoking on physical appearance.** Kids believe smoking will improve their self-image. In reality, smoking causes yellow teeth, bad breath, smelly clothes, and more severe and early facial wrinkles.
- **Destroy the myth that everybody smokes.** 80% do not.

*For help quitting, visit www.macombtobaccoprevention.com.

Ricki M. Torsch, M.S.A.
Health Educator
Macomb County Health Department