

# TOBACCO

SMOKING AND TEENAGERS: PARENTS FACT SHEET



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health**

# WHAT ARE THE LEGAL ISSUES AROUND SMOKING AND UNDER 18s?

All Australian states and territories have legislation which prohibits the sale of a tobacco product to a person under the age of 18 years. All jurisdictions also prohibit the supply of a tobacco product to a minor. In South Australia, Victoria, and the Northern Territory, it is also an offence to supply a tobacco product to someone who will supply it to another person under the age of 18 years.

Whilst some under-18s obtain cigarettes from unscrupulous or lax sellers, most children and teenagers get cigarettes from friends, family, or ask other people to purchase the product for them (for example, by waiting around a shop and asking).<sup>1</sup> It is therefore important for adults never to provide cigarettes to under-18s, and to discourage others from supplying them.<sup>2</sup>

## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO TRY TO ENSURE KIDS DON'T SMOKE?

Research on the risks of taking up smoking suggests that the following strategies are likely to be useful:<sup>2,3</sup>

- **Limit children's pocket money to reduce the amount available for cigarettes.**
- **Supervise children and teenagers. Make sure you know who they are with and where they are.**
- **Don't smoke yourself. If you smoke, keep trying to give up and talk to your children about how hard it is to give up but how important it is to keep trying.**
- **Don't smoke in front of children, and make sure children can't access your cigarettes.**
- **Make it clear to your children that you disapprove of smoking and that you expect them not to smoke.**
- **Enforce a strict smoke-free home – including for friends and visitors.**
- **Help your children to do well at school and to be involved in healthy activities, such as sports.**
- **Bear in mind that whilst some teenagers are experimenting with cigarettes, others are already smoking regularly and may need help to stop.**

## WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO GET INVOLVED IN PREVENTING SMOKING MORE WIDELY?

Some useful things parents can do are:<sup>2</sup>

- **Report tobacco sellers to your health department when they break the law – for example displaying tobacco when it should be out of sight, or selling illegal tobacco.**
- **Make sure that local schools and other services dealing with young people have strict no smoking policies.**
- **Support government policies that work to reduce tobacco use – such as high tobacco taxes, anti-tobacco advertising, smoke-free laws, tobacco plain packaging and health warnings, bans on tobacco advertising and restrictions on tobacco industry activities. These policies will help to protect your children and other people's children from chronic disease, early death and protracted suffering, and enable them to live fulfilling, healthier lives.**



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**There are many places you can find out more information about tobacco and smoking, including health information and advice to quit. These include:**

### **Quitline**

Telephone service for smokers who want to quit **13 7848 (13 Quit)**

**[www.quitnow.gov.au](http://www.quitnow.gov.au)**

Provides information about smoking and quitting, including a downloadable quit phone app My QuitBuddy

**[www.yourhealth.gov.au](http://www.yourhealth.gov.au)**

Commonwealth government website with information about tobacco plain packaging and health warnings

**[www.oxygen.org.au](http://www.oxygen.org.au)**

Website for young people with information about smoking, tobacco and the tobacco industry

**[www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au](http://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au)**

An encyclopaedia of just about anything you ever wanted to know about smoking and ways to control it

## INTERNATIONAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

**The United States Office of the Surgeon General publishes two informative booklets:**

### **Health effects of smoking**

**[www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/tobaccosmoke/index.html](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/tobaccosmoke/index.html)**

### **Preventing smoking amongst young people**

**[www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/sgr/2012/consumer\\_booklet/pdfs/consumer.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2012/consumer_booklet/pdfs/consumer.pdf)**

Some state and territory based websites with information about smoking and quitting are listed below.

State/Territory	Website
New South Wales (I Can Quit)	<a href="http://www.icanquit.org.au">www.icanquit.org.au</a>
Queensland (QLD Health)	<a href="http://www.health.qld.gov.au/atod/prevention/quitline.asp">www.health.qld.gov.au/atod/prevention/quitline.asp</a>
Victoria (Quit Victoria)	<a href="http://www.quit.org.au">www.quit.org.au</a>
Western Australia (Cancer Council)	<a href="http://www.cancerwa.asn.au">www.cancerwa.asn.au</a>
Australian Capital Territory (Cancer Council)	<a href="http://www.actcancer.org">www.actcancer.org</a>
Northern Territory (NT Health)	<a href="http://www.health.nt.gov.au/Alcohol_and_Other_Drugs/Tobacco/Quitline">www.health.nt.gov.au/Alcohol_and_Other_Drugs/Tobacco/Quitline</a>
Tasmania (Quit TAS)	<a href="http://www.quittas.org.au">www.quittas.org.au</a>
South Australia (Quit SA)	<a href="http://www.quitsa.org.au">www.quitsa.org.au</a>

### Kids Helpline

Free, private and confidential telephone and online counselling service for young people aged 5–25 years.

**Tel 1800 55 1800**

### Lifeline

A 24 hour crisis help line. **Tel 13 11 14**. Also provides one-on-one crisis support online chat.

**[www.lifeline.org.au/Find-Help/Online-Services/crisis-chat](http://www.lifeline.org.au/Find-Help/Online-Services/crisis-chat)**

## SOURCES

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011, 2010 National Drug Strategy Household Survey report. Drug statistics no. 25. Cat. No. PHE145. Canberra: AIHW.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing tobacco use among youth and young adults: a report of the Surgeon General. We CAN make the next generation smoke-free. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012. Available from: [http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/sgr/2012/consumer\\_booklet/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2012/consumer_booklet/index.htm)
3. Eureka Strategic Research. Youth tobacco prevention literature review. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, 2005. Available from: [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/578B39761374A043CA2570BF007CE6A4/\\$File/literature.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/578B39761374A043CA2570BF007CE6A4/$File/literature.pdf)

[sydney.edu.au/matilda-centre](http://sydney.edu.au/matilda-centre)

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This booklet was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health. It was written by Philip Hull. Expert review on an earlier version was provided by Ron Borland. Design and layout by Greg Stephenson of Netfront.

ISBN 978-0-7334-3308-5



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