

Health Bulletin

Now Is Time To Talk To Kids About Not Smoking

(NAPSA)—Youngsters love the freedom of unsupervised summer-time fun and time to play with their friends. But with these freedoms also come risks of which all parents should be aware.

Many children during summer will be approached with the opportunity to try their first cigarette. While it is unrealistic for parents to supervise their children every moment of every day this summer, your values and beliefs should be known and understood. That is why now is an ideal time for parents to talk to their children about how they feel about smoking and other negative behaviors.

Dr. Michael Popkin, author, parenting expert and spokesman for Talk Early, Talk Often, sponsored by Lorillard Tobacco Company's Youth Smoking Prevention Program, says children are trying their first cigarette as early as age 8, with the majority trying it between the ages of 12 and 14. Most of these children are approached by a friend who they consider to be "cool" and therefore has influence on their decisions. Popkin recommends establishing clear guidelines for your child's behavior.

Make Expectations Very Clear

"Taking the time to sit with your child and agree on clear guidelines for behavior can pay off greatly when your child has to make a choice about whether or not to try smoking," says Popkin. "I use the term 'problem-prevention talk,' which is a dialogue between you and your child that makes your expectations of him or her very clear."

The problem-prevention talk consists of five steps:

1. Identify potential problems and risks.

2. Share your thoughts and feelings about these problems and acknowledge your child's



A problem-prevention talk with your child can pay off.

thoughts and feelings.

3. Generate guidelines through brainstorming and negotiations (within limits that you can live with).

4. Decide on logical consequences for violating the guidelines (if necessary).

5. Follow up to ensure that guidelines were followed and to enforce consequences (if necessary).

Create A Written Contract

Creating a written contract between you and your child that clearly lists your expectations and the logical consequences that you will apply if these expectations are not met is another suggestion made by Popkin. "Written contracts ensure there is no miscommunication about your child's decision not to smoke," says Popkin.

Dr. Popkin is one of the nation's foremost experts on parenting education, with more than 25 years of experience helping families communicate about tough topics like smoking.

Parents are encouraged to visit www.keepkidsfromsmoking.com to prepare them for their conversations with their children. On this Web site, parents will find talking tips, warning signs, age-specific advice and further parenting advice.