

## **TOBACCO USE & the TEEN ATHLETE**

Teens turn to tobacco for a variety of reasons – to fit in, as a form of rebellion, to relieve stress & to help lose weight. However, 70% of teen smokers wish they had never started and two-thirds have made at least one unsuccessful attempt to quit. They are also more likely to drink heavily & use illegal drugs such as cocaine and marijuana.

### What makes tobacco so addictive?

- \*Nicotine is the addictive substance. It enhances the release of a number of brain chemicals that are associated with pleasure, appetite suppression and relaxation.
- \*For some people, nicotine is as addictive as heroin.
- \*Teens typically become addicted at relatively low doses of nicotine compared to adults. Smoking just one cigarette a day may cause withdrawal symptoms when trying to quit.

### What other forms of tobacco are there besides “regular” cigarettes?

- \*There are cigars and imported cigarettes (ex. bidis, kreteks – these deliver higher concentrations of carbon monoxide & tar than regular cigarettes do).
- \*Smokeless tobacco, also known as chew or dip, is produced in the forms of snuff & chewing tobacco.
  - Snuff is a fine-grain tobacco held in teabag-like pouches that users “pinch” or “dip” between their lower lip & gum.
  - Chewing tobacco comes in shredded, twisted or “bricked” tobacco leaves. Bricks are pressed into small, soft blocks flavored with licorice & sugar.

### Is smokeless tobacco less dangerous than cigarettes?

- \*No!! Surprisingly, the amount of nicotine absorbed into the bloodstream (through the tissues in the mouth) by sucking/chewing smokeless tobacco is 3 or 4 times higher than the amount delivered by a regular cigarette.
- \*There have been 28 carcinogens (things known to cause cancer) identified in chewing tobacco & snuff, and smokeless tobacco users actually have a higher risk of developing oral (mouth) cancer than cigarette smokers.
- \*Oral cancer can occur in the lips, tongue, floor of the mouth, roof of the mouth, cheeks or gums, as well as enter the lining of the esophagus, stomach & bladder.

### What are some of the side effects on a teen who smokes?

- \*They may produce phlegm more than twice as often as non-smoking teens.
- \*They may suffer from shortness of breath almost 3 times as often as non-smoking teens.
- \*Respiratory infections are more prevalent & more severe among smokers.

### What are some of the side effects on athletes who smoke?

- \*Smoking at a young age can hamper the rate of lung growth & the level of maximum lung function affecting both athletic performance & endurance.
- \*The effects of tobacco use are extremely limiting to athletic performance, especially when athletes are recovering from injuries.
- \*Smoking increases the oxygen requirements of the heart muscle, but lowers the oxygen supply available, therefore, it may increase your breathing rate & blood pressure during exercise and this will reduce athletic performance.
- \*The nicotine in cigarettes narrows the blood vessels putting added strain on the heart, which overtime will effect athletic performance.