

ROCKLAND NEWS

A Sticky Situation



I love a good party. I love to get dressed up; I love the excitement of getting to meet new people, trying new food and dancing to different music. But I found out a few weeks ago that I *don't* love a party where kids are drinking alcohol.

A lot of kids don't know this but alcohol is a drug . . . it changes your body, your mind and the way you behave. I think it makes people act clumsy and stupid. More importantly, it is illegal for anyone under the age of 21 to drink alcohol.

Still, sometimes there is alcohol available to kids at parties and in social situations. That's why you've got to get tough and be ready to say "No" when someone pressures you to drink. The best thing to do is simply say, "No, I don't drink," or walk away. Even better? Spend time with people who are working hard, doing positive things and have no interest in wasting their time on alcohol.

And one more thing . . . alcohol is responsible for a third of highway deaths. Which is just another reason why drinking alcohol is a dumb thing to do.

A Fresh Look at Smoking Statistics

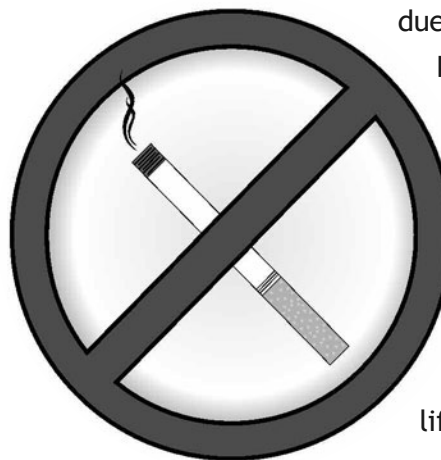


Smoking is one of the most dangerous and unhealthy things anyone can choose to do. Smoking kills more than 400,000 people every year. But the bigger story is that most kids say they will never, ever smoke, even if their best friend asked them to try.

A recent survey by KidsHealth asked more than 1,400 kids what they thought about cigarettes and chewing tobacco. Here are some of their responses:

- 85% of kids surveyed had NEVER tried cigarettes or chewing tobacco;
- 62% of kids live in houses where nobody smokes;
- 88% of kids said it was very unlikely or sort of unlikely that they would smoke, even if asked to do so by their best friend

The results of this survey are important because many kids start smoking due to peer pressure.



Comments such as "everybody does it" just aren't true. The truth is that most kids will not smoke in their lifetime.

Q: *I've asked my mom to quit smoking a hundred times and she always says she can't cause she's addicted. What does she mean? Is there anything I can do to help her quit?*

A: *You've asked some tough questions. An addiction is an uncontrollable need for something. What makes quitting smoking so hard is that cigarettes contain nicotine, which is an addictive substance. That means that nicotine causes changes in the body and brain that make someone want to smoke even more.*

The good news is that quitting smoking is possible, but it takes a lot of work. First, your mother really needs to want to quit smoking. Second, your mother needs to get help to fight her body's addiction to nicotine. Her doctor can suggest many tools such as the nicotine patch and new prescription drugs that have proven to help people quit. As for you, continue to love and support your mother and to gently encourage her to quit.



Healthy Lifestyle Choices (HLC) is a nonprofit organization working to empower youth with the knowledge and skills to make healthy decisions for a lifetime. Find out more by visiting their website at www.HLConline.org.



My Corner of the World



Skull and crossbones aren't just on pirate flags. Sometimes they are on bottles that contain poisons in and around your house. Most of the time, our parents try to hide dangerous poisons in the kitchen or garage. But I am here to tell you that if you find some, don't ever touch them.

In fact, don't ever touch them, smell them and certainly do not taste them. This is important if you have a little sister or brother in the house. Ask your mom and dad to put all poisons out of the reach of little kids. And if you aren't sure about something, ask your mom or dad before you touch it.

If you or someone in your house accidentally hurts themselves with poison, you should know how to call your local poison control center. Some poison control centers have their own phone number, but most can also be reached by calling 9-1-1. But remember, 9-1-1 and other emergency numbers should only be used in a real emergency.

So be careful around the house. And if you don't know if something's dangerous, keep your hands off!

