Don’t Hold Your Breath

Goal
To discourage the use of tobacco by youth.

Objectives
Participants will:

- Discuss the cost of using tobacco.
- Experience the lack of oxygen in the lungs.
- Determine the amount of tar the lungs accumulate from tobacco use.
- See how the tissues of the lungs become hard.

Key Teaching Points

- Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States.
- Poisons in tobacco are absorbed through the skin in the mouth and through the lungs.
- Tar from tobacco use accumulates in the lungs creating emphysema which causes you to slowly suffocate.
- Second hand smoke causes the same problems as actually smoking the cigarette.

Let’s look at the impact tobacco has on your money and on your health.

First, let’s look at the cost of using tobacco. **(Do Activity I)**

Now let’s look at the impact tobacco has on your health.

Tobacco is the leading preventable cause of death in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control, tobacco kills more Tennesseans than alcohol, AIDS, heroin, auto accidents, suicides, hand gun murders and fires combined.

The poisons in tobacco are absorbed through the skin in the mouth and through the lungs causing body functions to slow down or stop. One of the poisons in tobacco is tar. Tar is the black, oily stuff used to pave streets. It coats the air sacs in the lungs until you can no longer breathe and you suffocate to death (suffocating to death in this way is called emphysema). Over the years, you are slowly suffocating, your body doesn’t get the amount of oxygen it needs and the blood vessels get narrow, the kidney and bladder are washed with tobacco poisons daily, and the heart is over worked. Soon a simple activity like walking is hard to do.

**(Do the remaining activities)**

As you can see, tobacco has an impact on our health as well as our money. Also, breathing in second hand smoke, smoke from someone else’s cigarette, has the same impact on your body as if you were the one smoking. Avoid all tobacco and second hand smoke to increase your life span and your money supply.

Activities

*Activity I - Counting Your Money*

- Ask participants to write down (may be done as a group or individually) the things that they would do with $1,000 if it was given to them. (Concert tickets, buy CD’s, pay for school tuition, take a trip, buy furniture, etc.)
- Ask participants to multiply 365 by $2.74 (about the cost of a package of cigarettes/spit
tobacco). Answer: approximately $1,000.

- If you saved $2.74 a day for one year, you would save $1,000.
- If you spent $2.74 a day for one year on tobacco, what would you have?

**Activity II - Can You Breathe?**
Give each participant a 3-inch section of drinking straw. Explain the experiment:

- Run in place 1 minute.
- Put the straw in your mouth and breathe only through the straw (not through the nose).
- Bite gently on the straw as you try to breath to simulate an even more severe case of emphysema (slowly suffocating to death).
- Resume normal breathing without the straw.

**Caution: Be sure participants have no health restrictions before they take part in the exercise.**

The effort needed to breathe through the straw resembles the characteristic shortness of breath caused by emphysema.

Discuss participant reactions. Did they gulp air? People with emphysema never get that gulp.

**Activity III - Tar Baby**
Show the amount of tar that a pack-a-day smoker would inhale in a year (approximately 1 cupful, according to the American Cancer Society). Pour 1 cup of thick, dark syrup or molasses slowly into a tall, thin, clear container. Let participants guess when you will stop pouring.

Ask participants:

- Were you surprised at the amount of tar inhaled by a pack-a-day smoker? Why or why not?
- What would happen if this were a 2 pack-a-day smoker?

**Activity IV - Stay Soft**
Allow participants to compare the feel of a damp, soft sponge and a dry, hard sponge. The sponges demonstrate the difference between healthy lung tissue and damaged tissue.

Ask participants:

- Why is hardened lung tissue a problem?

Answer:

- Once the air sacs or Alveoli in the lungs are hardened, they can no longer squeeze out air.

**Evaluation**
Ask participants to fill-out the *Youth Health Breaks* Evaluation for ‘Don’t Hold Your Breath.’

**Additional Resources**
The Surgeon General’s Report for Kids about Smoking
http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/sgr4kids/sgrmenu.htm

UT Extension publications SP 502-G Teen Wellness: Smokeless Tobacco and SP 502-I Teen Wellness: Is Your Teen Too Smart to Start Using Tobacco are designed for parents of adolescents and can be used as a resource for the instructor.