

## Dear Family,

Did you know that **more than 2,300 people younger than 18 years of age begin smoking cigarettes every day**? Many of these young smokers picked up the habit before entering high school, increasing their risk for heart disease and stroke. **Smoking is the most important preventable cause of premature death in the United States.** It increases the risk of coronary heart disease and is linked to stroke, lung cancer, and many other types of cancer. On average, **smokers die more than ten years earlier than nonsmokers.**

Be aware of e-cigarettes. These battery-powered devices deliver a vapor of nicotine and other additives and are marketed in kid-friendly flavors like cherry, peach, and vanilla. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that in 2012, **more than 1.78 million middle and high school students tried e-cigarettes.** In addition to cigarettes and e-cigarettes, talk to your children about all forms of tobacco—cigarillos and smokeless tobacco are also heavily marketed to children.

Take the time to talk to your child about this important topic; even young children can understand that smoking is bad for their health. Talk about the risks associated with smoking and take steps to protect your child from secondhand smoke.

If you are a smoker, there are important steps that you can take today. Your lungs can begin to heal themselves as soon as you stop smoking. The risk of heart disease can be reduced by following a treatment plan—and one of the most important parts of that plan is to stop smoking.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_  
teacher



**American  
Heart  
Association®**

life is why™

Your child is a participant in the American Heart Association's Jump Rope for Heart program. The AHA has five priority messages for your family:

Physical Activity

Healthy Eating

Sodium

Sodas and Other

Sugary Drinks



Tobacco/Smoking



**Here are a few easy steps you can take** to make sure your child doesn't try cigarettes:

- **Set an example by not smoking.** Give consistent messages about the risks of smoking and make it clear to your child that you don't want him or her to smoke. Explain that no tobacco product is safe. These include smokeless tobacco products, which also increase the risks of heart attack, stroke, and certain cancers. Make sure your child understands that e-cigarettes and fruit-flavored cigarillos also are not safe alternatives.
- **Set a smoke-free policy in your home.** Exposure to secondhand smoke can increase the risk for a heart attack or stroke. More than 33,000 nonsmokers die every year from coronary heart disease caused by exposure to secondhand smoke. Children of smokers have many more respiratory infections than children of nonsmokers.
  - **If you're a smoker, seriously consider quitting and don't smoke around your children.** And remember, cigars and pipes aren't safer alternatives to cigarettes; people who smoke these still have a higher risk of death from coronary heart disease than nonsmokers.

