

Youth Tobacco Cessation: How to ACT (Ask-Counsel-Treat) in 2-3 Minutes

This tip sheet provides 3 easy steps that every pediatric health clinician should follow to address youth tobacco use at every clinical encounter. The steps are designed to allow for a meaningful intervention with minimal workflow disruption. For a full, detailed strategy for addressing youth tobacco cessation, please visit www.aap.org/youthcessation.

ASK: Screen for tobacco use with every youth age 11+ at every clinical encounter.

“Do you use any tobacco or vaping products, like cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or dip?”

TIPS:

- Use specific examples of products commonly used in your community
- Incorporate question into existing screeners
- If possible, screen confidentially, without a parent or guardian present

Reinforce behavior and screen again at next visit.

Yes

COUNSEL: Counsel all patients who use tobacco about quitting, regardless of amount used.

“Nicotine can harm your brain development.”

“Quitting will protect your health, save money, and increase your independence.”

“Quitting is hard, but I believe you can do it. I’m here to help.”

“Are you interested in quitting today?”

TIPS:

- Use a strengths-based perspective and non-judgmental language
- Use personal examples of the benefits of quitting (eg, better athletic performance)

Revisit at next visit.*

*For inpatient settings, also connect with youth’s PCP for follow-up.

No

Yes

TREAT: Link youth to appropriate behavioral supports; consider prescribing cessation medication when indicated.

“There are programs that can help you quit. Would you rather get support by text, online, or phone?”

“This program will help you make a quit plan and stick with it. It will also help you deal with cravings and triggers.”

“I’ll follow up with you in a few weeks to see how it’s going.”

TIPS:

Choose a program that meets youth’s needs and link them while they’re in your office. Options include:

- Text: Text “QUIT” to 47848
- Online: www.teen.smokefree.gov
- Phone: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

For a full list of programs, visit www.aap.org/help2quit

Assess whether NRT may be appropriate for your patient:

For full details on prescribing NRT to youth, including contraindications and dosing guidelines, visit www.AAP.org/NRT

Follow up with youth after their quit date to assess progress and offer additional support. Anyone on the patient care team can handle this follow-up conversation; follow your typical office workflow.