

# ***Stop Before You Start***

***The University of WI-Stevens Point is a tobacco-free campus***

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People smoke for different reasons- to relax, to appear more grown up, peer pressure, or out of boredom. A lot of myths have developed about smoking. Understanding the facts about these myths might help you make a healthy decision the next time you have a chance to “light up”.

## ***Myth # 1- Smoking can't hurt me while I am young and healthy.***

You probably know that smoking can cause long-term illness like emphysema and cancer. Eventually, smoking can even kill you. Effects of cigarette smoking on health begins early.

- Smoking decreases most smokers' sense of taste and smell.
- Smokers tend to eat more salty and sweet foods than non-smokers. Both are harmful if you eat a lot.
- Smoking reduces healthy levels of essential vitamins, minerals, and anti-oxidants that the body is able to use. Anti-oxidants are the nutrients in food that actually help prevent cancer and slow down signs of aging, like wrinkles.
- Contrary to popular belief, low-tar or light cigarettes are no less harmful than regular cigarettes. There is no safe cigarette.

Smokers are less active than non-smokers. Smokers are more likely than non-smokers to develop heart disease. Smoking reduces the lungs' ability to function and shrinks air passages. These changes block airflow, which may make breathing harder during exercise.

## ***Myth # 2- Smoking is cool.***

Smoking has lost its luster. Since the 1960's when most Americans smoked, cigarette smoking has become less and less socially acceptable. In addition to decreased desirability, smoking detracts from personal appearance and hygiene. For instance, smoking causes bad breath, stained teeth, wheezing, coughing, phlegm, and ALWAYS makes hair and clothes smell bad.

In a recent survey, adults reported that tobacco smoke is the third most offensive odor, followed by body odor and bad breath. Most students understand the smelly habit of smoking and its threat on their lives. Most college students disapprove of smoking and this percentage is rising. Smoking is not the road to popularity.

## ***Myth # 3- Smoking will help me lose weight.***

It's important to feel good about how you look. Overall, smokers do weigh less than non-smokers and weight concerns have been reported as motivators to start smoking, primarily by women. Chances are, if you are willing to start smoking to lose weight, you probably aren't losing weight for health reasons. Cigarettes contain chemicals like arsenic, ammonia, and formaldehyde, which are not very healthy. While smoking is not likely to cause visible changes in weight, smokers definitely stand out. They often have yellow teeth, yellow fingers and nails, smelly clothes and hair, and less spending money. Smoking may have a minor impact on weight, but exercise is a healthier longer lasting approach to weight loss.

## ***Myth # 4- Smoking is cheap.***

Cigarette prices vary from \$5 to \$10 per pack. At an average of \$6.50 per pack, a person who smokes a pack per day would spend almost \$1277 per year on cigarettes.

Think about where your money goes- you have choices. A tobacco company executive was quoted as saying, “We don't smoke it. We just sell it. We reserve that for the young, the black, the poor, and the stupid.” Now that you have a few of the facts, do you think using tobacco is such a good idea?



Information adapted from “Health Facts 101- Stop Before You Start” written by Michelle Chiezah, MA.



This document was prepared by the staff of the UWSP Student Health Promotion Office.  
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