

What Nicotine Does to the Brain: Why one Hit Addicts

By Cheryl Dudley

Facts and Stats

“B” Average for MAY

According to Idaho Code 39-5701 the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare must inspect each business that sells tobacco to ensure that it does not sell tobacco to minors. In MAY 2008

- ❖ 118 Vendors were inspected.*
- ❖ 22 Vendors sold to the inspecting minor.
- ❖ The compliance rate for the month of May 2008 was 81.36%?

*Inspections where purchase attempts were made.

Prevent the Sale Web site

www.preventthesale.com/idaho

- Learn about the law
- Take the tobacco quiz
- See what the ID's look like
- Play the Game "Would You Sell to This Person?"

Smokeless Tobacco Ads Target Teens

A ScienceDaily article dated February 5 notes that a new study reveals young people who read the most popular magazines are exposed to a great deal of advertising by smokeless tobacco companies.

Health experts claim that smokeless tobacco is highly addictive and can cause mouth and throat cancer. But young people aren't as educated about the dangers of smokeless tobacco as they are about cigarettes.

"Media vehicles *know* who their audiences are and should be cautious in accepting advertising for products like smokeless tobacco when the vehicles have young audiences," said study author Margaret Morrison.

Although many tobacco companies reduced their advertising or completely quit advertising cigarettes after the tobacco settlement agreement to comply with the court ruling, many continued advertising smokeless tobacco.

Advertising practices directed at youth has improved, but claims that smokeless tobacco is a safer substitute is attracting youth. Ads are popular in magazines with a high youth readership, such as Motor Trend, Rolling Stone and Sports Illustrated.

What is Nicotine Addiction?

Nicotine is the tobacco plant's natural protection from being eaten by insects. It is a super toxin that, drop for drop, is more lethal than strychnine or diamondback rattlesnake poison or arsenic. Yet this natural insecticide's chemical structure is so similar to the human brain's neurotransmitter acetylcholine that once inside the brain it controls the flow of more than 200 neurochemicals.

Within eight seconds of that first inhaled puff, though dizzy, coughing and six shades of green, nicotine arrives at the brain's reward pathways where it generates an unearned flood of dopamine, resulting in an immediate yet possibly unrecognized "aaahhh" reward sensation. Nicotine also unlocks the gates releasing a host of neurochemicals that impact mood.

Brain Defenses Create Dependency

Since nicotine is a toxic poison, the brain's

defenses fight back, but in doing so have no choice but to turn down the mind's sensitivity to acetylcholine. Remember that this is the neurotransmitter that controls the flow of neurochemicals in the body.

All the complex physical changes in the brain after that first nicotine hit engineer a new neurochemical sense of "normal" built entirely upon the presence of nicotine. In other words, just one hit of nicotine is enough to alter the structure of neurotransmitters in the brain.

Now, any attempt to stop using it comes with a risk of intermittent temporary anxieties and powerful mood shifts.

Going back to the "real you" now has a price. Gradually the calmness and comfort associated with being the "real you" fades into distant or even forgotten memory.

The brain's protective adjustments insure that any attempt to stop smoking will leave you temporarily desensitized. Your dopamine reward system will briefly offer up few rewards, your nervous system would sound an emotional anxiety alarm throughout your body, and mood circuitry might briefly find it difficult to climb beyond depression.

In other words--a true chemical addiction is born. Most addicted smokers start smoking before 19 years old—a vulnerable age that can be easily persuaded by peer pressure to take a hit of nicotine. Now you know why just one hit is dangerous.

By refusing to sell tobacco to minors, you are saving lives. Preventing just one teen from trying that first cigarette is worth the risk of confrontation.

If you fear confrontation, read on. On the next page are a few tools to help you power up your responsibility to say "No."



Tools for Refusing the Sale

When refusing a sale, your tone of voice, body language and word choice can either start or prevent a confrontation with a customer. If you feel uncomfortable refusing the sale, try following these guidelines:

- Remain calm.
- If the product is on the counter, remove it.
- Be polite. Apologize. Maintain a customer service attitude.
- Remember that refusing a sale is not your choice; it is the law.

Using the right words can help defuse a difficult situation. Try using the following statements:

- "I'm sorry. It's against the law."
- "I can be fined and even lose my job."
- "Is there anything else I can get you?"
- "I'd be happy to hold this for you while you go get your ID."

Confrontational customers may be a challenging part of your job, but you have the responsibility to refuse underage sales. Don't let an abusive customer discourage you from carding in the future.

If you have reason to believe that an adult customer is buying tobacco for a minor, the responsible thing to do is refuse the sale. If you suspect that this is happening, be polite and informative and explain that you and the customer could get into a lot of trouble if you make the sale.

Occasionally a parent may send their child to purchase tobacco products for them. Some minors even present a note from the parent saying it's okay to make the sale. But state laws are clear on this subject. Under no circumstance are you permitted to sell tobacco to a minor. If you encounter this situation:

- Explain that it's against the law for you to sell tobacco products to minors.
- Be polite. The words and tone you use will most likely be repeated to the parent.

Sometimes underage friends will try to purchase tobacco products while you are working. It's important that you refuse these sales. If you encounter this situation, you should:

- Tell your friends that you can be fined or lose your job.
- Refer to your store's video cameras or to your supervisor's presence as a deterrent.

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What's Inside:

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