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**Women, High School and Middle School Youth: What You Should Know About Tobacco**  
**Great American Smokeout® Fact Sheet #3**

**Women**

- Women who smoke greatly increase their risk of heart disease (the leading killer among women) and stroke.
- Female smokers ages 35 or older are more likely to die from emphysema or bronchitis.
- Women who smoke have an increased risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, preterm delivery, infant death and low birth weight infants.
- Breast milk of women who smoke has been found to contain nicotine.

**High School**

**Tobacco and Athletic Performance**

- Don't get trapped. Nicotine in cigarettes, cigars, and spit tobacco is addictive.
- Nicotine narrows your blood vessels and puts added strain on your heart.
- Smoking can wreck lungs and reduce oxygen available for muscles used during sports.
- Smokers suffer shortness of breath (gasp!) almost 3 times more often than nonsmokers.
- Smokers run slower and can't run as far, affecting overall athletic performance.
- Cigars and spit tobacco are NOT safe alternatives.

**Tobacco and Personal Appearance**

- Yuck! Tobacco smoke can make hair and clothes smell badly.
- Tobacco stains teeth and causes bad breath.
- Short-term use of spit tobacco can cause cracked lips, white spots, sores, and bleeding in the mouth.
- Surgery to remove oral cancers caused by tobacco use can lead to serious changes in the face. Sean Marcee, a high school star athlete who used spit tobacco, died of oral cancer when he was 19 years old.



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- Know the truth. Despite all the tobacco use on TV and in movies, music videos, billboards and magazines – most teens, adults, and athletes DON'T use tobacco.
- Make friends, develop athletic skills, control weight, be independent, be cool ... play sports.
- Don't waste (burn) money on tobacco. Spend it on CD's, clothes, computer games, and movies.
- Get involved: make your team, school, and home tobacco-free; teach others; join community efforts to prevent tobacco use.



### Middle School

- The peak years for initiating smoking are in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades or between ages 11 and 12, with a considerable number of youth starting earlier.
- Within weeks or even days of first starting to smoke, young smokers can show signs of addiction such as feeling anxious or irritable and having strong urges to smoke.
- More than one-third of all kids who ever try smoking a cigarette will become regular daily smokers before they complete high school.

*For information about the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout®, [www.greatamericansmokeout.org](http://www.greatamericansmokeout.org). Georgia Tobacco Quit Line and Live Healthy Georgia Campaign <http://health.state.ga.us/healthtopics/lhg.asp> . Georgia Smoke Free Air Act, <http://dhr.georgia.gov/gasmokefreeair>*

*Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Georgia Department of Human Resources*