



FACTS ON SPORTS AND SMOKE FREE YOUTH



Research has shown that students who participate in interscholastic sports are less likely to be regular and heavy smokers. Students who play at least one sport are 40% less likely to be regular smokers and 50% less likely to be heavy smokers. Regular and heavy smoking decreases substantially with an increase in the number of sports played.

The lower rates of smoking for student athletes may be related to a number of factors:

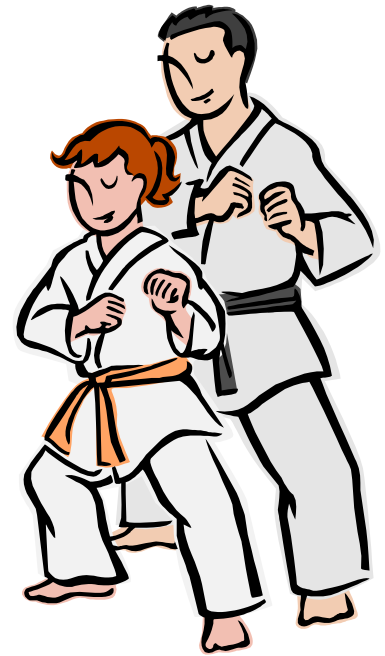
- Greater self-confidence gained from sports participation
- Additional counseling from coaching staff about smoking
- Reduced peer influences about smoking
- Perceptions about reduced sports performance because of smoking
- Greater awareness about the health consequences of smoking

Special Benefits for Girls

Smoking becomes a way for preteen and teen women to build a sense of self and stay connected with peers in the face of enormous pressures to be beautiful, successful, sophisticated, thin, independent, and popular, seductive images that are reinforced in movies, music videos, and advertising.

Sports and physical activity are positive, viable alternatives to smoking in the lives of young women. They can give adolescent women the very benefits they perceive in smoking:

- Independence
- status with their peers
- a chance to make friends
- Relaxation
- weight management
- a more positive sense of self



Girls who play sports have higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression than girls who do not play sports.

Girls who play sports have a more positive body image and experience higher states of psychological well being than girls and women who do not play sports.

Girls who play sports learn about teamwork, goal-setting, the experience of success, the pursuit of excellence in performance, how to deal with failures, and other positive behaviors, all of which are important skills for the workplace and life.

This article has been reprinted from the Centers for Disease Control Website:

www.cdc.gov

