

a real drag

A study of over 1,000 sixth-graders shows that 25% of kids who smoke become addicted within one month of taking their first puff. Shockingly, 10% get hooked after two days. Researchers also found that smoking just a few cigarettes a month can lead to withdrawal symptoms when kids are deprived of nicotine. "Talk to your kids about these statistics to help them understand how quickly they can become addicted," says Joseph R. DiFranza, M.D., professor of family medicine at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester. Your pediatrician can help stress the dangers of addiction and drive home the fact that this is a medical problem. —Caren Oppenheim



Q&A My 8-year-old daughter snores up a storm at night. Should I be worried?

Maybe. Snoring can be tied to sleep apnea, allergies or asthma. "Irregular sounds or pauses in breathing may mean your daughter isn't getting enough quality sleep," says Daniel Lewin, Ph.D., director of pediatric behavioral sleep medicine at the Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Study her snore and listen for snorts, gasps or pauses. See her pediatrician, who may recommend enrolling her in a sleep study to help diagnose her specific problem. —Rachel B. Martin

cavity-proof halloween

Halloween means candy—even for kids who've outgrown trick-or-treating. To keep your kids smiling long after the sugar rush is gone, follow these tips from Alan Zweig, D.D.M., a cosmetic dentist in Beverly Hills, California.

SAY CHEESE: Snacking on cheese can ward off cavities since it re-mineralizes areas of early tooth decay and helps buffer acids produced by oral bacteria.

STAY HYDRATED: Have your kids drink plenty of H₂O throughout the day, especially after eating sweets and other sticky foods, to help rinse away the sugar.

CHOOSE CHOCOLATE: Sticky treats such as chewy fruit snacks, raisins or bubble gum can loosen fillings. Chocolate, on the other hand, dissolves quickly and is easy to brush off. —C.O.



an apple a day...

If your child has asthma, add apple juice to your grocery list. A recent study found that kids who drink the juice from concentrate at least once a day are at 47% lower risk for wheezing than children who drink it less often.