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Risks for boys

"It seems, in fact, as though the second half of a man's life is made up of nothing but the habits he has accumulated during the first half."
Fyodor Dostoevsky, Russian writer (1821–81)

Generally, risk factors for childhood cancers cannot be reduced by behaviour change. However, certain behaviours that begin at a young age will increase the risk of cancer later in life. The most notable is tobacco use, the leading cause of cancer mortality worldwide. Exposure to infectious diseases, obesity and excessive sunshine, leading a sedentary lifestyle or eating insufficient fruit and vegetables also increase the risk for developing cancer as an adult.

Most tobacco use begins in early adolescence; worldwide, teenage boys are more likely to start smoking than teenage girls. Cancer deaths would be greatly reduced worldwide if the rates at which young people started smoking decreased. Taxation of tobacco products is the most effective strategy to discourage smoking: as prices increase, tobacco use decreases, especially among young smokers. Other important deterrents include bans on all tobacco advertising and promotion, and smoking restrictions as part of a comprehensive campaign.

Up to 30 percent of cancers are related to diet and nutrition. Because young people who develop healthy eating habits early in life are more likely to continue those healthy habits as adults, efforts to assure a healthy diet for children and young people should be part of a comprehensive cancer control strategy.

