

Breathe Easy Track Meet

Essential Information

Organize a track meet to show how cigarettes can affect people's ability to perform well as athletes.

Age Group: elementary or middle school. You can also ask a local high school or college track team to help out at the event.

Number of Participants: 15 or more

Time: A half-day activity, one week to plan.

Resources: straws, baton or paper towel roll to decorate, paint or markers, measuring stick

Cost: Under \$20

You can either organize a special track meet to educate students about the harms of tobacco, or you can add the theme to one of your school's scheduled track meets.

At the beginning of the meet, give a brief overview of the events and have all the athletes participate in a quick activity. Give everyone a straw and have them hop on one foot or run in place for 30 seconds while breathing through the straw. This is meant to stimulate how it feels for a smoker to breathe while participating in physical activities. Remind everyone to keep this in mind while they are running their races.

Relay Events: Get rid of that cigarette as fast as you can!

You can have a variety of relays so everyone can participate. The first thing to do is decorate your baton (a track baton or an empty towel roll) with a paper or paint to look like a cigarette. Then cover the cigarette baton with hazard and warning labels. For example, use the Surgeon General's warning, or be creative and make your own! For the relay, tell everyone they need to get rid of the "cigarette" as fast as they can by passing it off to their teammates.

Individual Events: Breath Easy!

Get ready to race. Hold individual events from the 50 meter dash to the two-mile run, making everyone aware of the simple fact that if they were to smoke, they would not perform as well, nor be able to breathe as easily while running.

Shot Put Event: Crush big tobacco!

The "Crush Big Tobacco" shot put event is just like a normal shot put event- everyone is trying to throw the shot put as far as possible. For the distance marker lines you have a variety of options:

- You can decorate posts to look like cigarettes for each distance line.
- Make a line of tobacco advertisements for the kids to "crush" as they throw the shot put.
- Come up with your own idea!
- If you don't have a real shot put ball, don't worry about it – any ball will do.

Long Jump Event: How far will you go to stay tobacco-free and stop Big Tobacco?

If you have a long jump put at your track, all you have to do is let students take turns jumping. If not, you can perform this event on a field instead. All you need is a line to start from, a line to jump from, and a tape measure to keep track of how far people jump.

Additional Ideas:

Make posters with tobacco statistics on them and line them up around the inside or outside of the track. This way people can read some of the statistics while running by and learn about the harmful effects of tobacco.

A couple of weeks before the event start making a media contact list and preparing media materials.