



Yuck! I Can't Breathe!

When a person smokes a cigarette he is inhaling tar into his lungs. The lungs have tiny sacs called ‘alveoli’. These sacs allow the breathing process to work. Some of the tar that makes its way into the lungs becomes deposited in these tiny air sacs. Two things can occur. First, the sacs can become filled up with tar and cease to function. Second, the air sacs can fill up with tar and burst. Either way it reduces the ability of your lungs to do their job. When this occurs, you experience a shortness of breath. When it becomes severe it is called emphysema. But you don't have to have the disease emphysema to have reduced breathing capacity. This can occur a short time after you begin smoking. Here is a bit of trivia for you: the tar that comes from cigarettes is the same tar that is used to make asphalt roads. If you were to smoke one pack of cigarettes per day for a year, you would be inhaling the equivalent of a quart jar of tar into your lungs per year.

Materials Needed:

- ◆ One shortened drinking straw for each student

Activity:

Have your students stand up. Tell them to jog in place. Pretend that you are running up hill, down hill and across a flat field. Remind them to take good strong deep breaths as they do this. Now stop them and pass out a straw to each student. Repeat the same process, but this time tell them that they can only breathe through the straw. Do not allow this part of the activity to go on so long that students feel faint. Collect the straws before going on to the processing stage.

Discussion of Ideas:

- ◆ How did you feel when you were jogging the first time?
- ◆ How did you feel when you were jogging and breathing through the straw?
- ◆ How many of you had trouble running hard and breathing through the straw?
- ◆ Did any of you feel light headed when breathing through the straw?
- ◆ How do you think this activity relates to smoking?
- ◆ What activities can you think of that would be hard to do if you were a smoker?
- ◆ What kind of activities would you like to do in the future that would be more difficult if you were a smoker?