

Game on: Tobacco-Free Teens app goes live on iTunes

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An app to prevent teens from smoking and encourage them to quit if they've started is now just a few taps away and available free on the Apple iTunes Store.

"Our [app](#) combines education and entertainment with comics and interactive games," said designer Alexander Prokhorov, M.D., Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Behavioral Science at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. "It motivates teens to stay away from tobacco and teaches behavioral skills to help them resist pro-tobacco pressures. Such an approach is much more appealing to youth than text-based instructional tools."

Prokhorov, who's also director of MD Anderson's Tobacco Outreach Education Program, led the development of the Tobacco-Free Teens app from content largely drawn from MD Anderson's ASPIRE (A Smoking Prevention Interactive Experience) program, a bilingual, online tobacco prevention and cessation curriculum targeting middle and [high school students](#) around the world.

Equipped with colorful animated teen characters and cool tunes, the app – available for iOS platform – addresses those who have never smoked, those wanting to quit, those having trouble quitting and those not interested in quitting. The app includes gaming activities that reinforce smoking-cessation tips tailored for the teenage audience. In one game the user's task is to tap away various temptations to smoke –depicted as objects – that rapidly moves around the smartphone screen.

Another game challenges teens to match two pairs of cards that contain memorable images of smoking consequences including yellow teeth, bad breath and stained fingers. "Every module of the app was carefully designed with teens in mind," said Prokhorov. "Most teens are very particular about their appearance and don't realize that smoking can affect their appearance well before they develop cancer."

Prokhorov has been on the edge of prevention and smoking-cessation technology innovations for teens for many years now. He's co-director of MD Anderson's e-Health Technology Program, which is funded by the Duncan Family Institute for Cancer Prevention and Risk Assessment. He's confident the app will serve as a handy tool to prevent [teens](#) from smoking, educate and encourage teen smokers to quit, and prevent relapse among recent quitters.

"The Tobacco-Free Teens app is a perfect tool complimenting the many smoking-cessation efforts that are underway at MD Anderson," said Prokhorov. "We're proud to be among the pioneers of tobacco prevention and cessation apps."

More information: Tobacco-Free Teens was funded by the Tobacco Outreach Education Program (TOEP). It has been downloaded more than 1,000 times since its launch June 27 on the Apple iTunes App store.

Provided by University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center

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