



“Straw Activity”

Items needed: regular straws, coffee stirrers, a clock to time the activities
Read aloud everything in bold.

Smoking cigarettes causes, or worsens, many lung diseases, including lung cancer, emphysema, bronchitis, and asthma. When you smoke, your lungs fill up with smoke, tar, and harmful chemicals. Your lungs can get infections and inflammation. This activity will help you realize how hard it is for some smokers to breathe even when they’re resting. If you have asthma, please don’t participate in this activity; also, if you feel lightheaded or dizzy, please stop the activity.

(You can either choose a number of volunteers to do this activity, or have the entire group do the activity)

First, let’s all run in place for thirty seconds, breathing normally.

(group runs in place for thirty seconds)

How is everyone feeling?

(let different people respond and comment on responses)

Okay, now, everyone put a straw in your mouth, pinch your nose, and breathe “normally” through your mouth. This gives you an idea of what it feels like to be a person who smokes. Now, keep the straw in your mouth, pinch your nose, and run in place for thirty more seconds.

(group runs in place for thirty seconds)

How is everyone feeling? *(let one or two people respond and comment on answers.)*

Now, put the coffee stirrer in your mouth, pinch your nose, and breathe. We will run in place for thirty seconds.

(group runs in place for thirty seconds)

This is how people with severe airway and lung disease, like emphysema, feel when they try to breathe through their mouth and nose. It is difficult to exhale and to catch your breath. They often need to use oxygen at all times just to stay alive. How is everyone feeling?

Note: You can also have students compete in simple relays or running games to help them understand how the diminished lung capacity would affect them. Or you can have half of the group compete with the straws/stirrers and half of the group without)